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PARENTHOOD AND THE NEWER PSYCHOLOGY

FRANK HOWARD RICHARDSON, A.B., M.D.

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By F. H. RICHARDSON, A.B., M.D.

SIMPLIFYING MOTHERHOOD

PARENTHOOD AND THE NEWER PSYCHOLOGY

PARENTHOOD

AND THE

NEWER PSYCHOLOGY

BEING

The Application of Old Principles in a New Guise to the Problems of Parents with Their Children

BY

FRANK HOWARD RICHARDSON, A.B., M.D.

Author of "Simplifying Motherhood"
"Malnutrition and the Child," etc.

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To

THE FOUR GREAT TEACHERS

at whose hands—sometimes with nails unsheathed!—
I have learned what little I know about the
Newer Psychology;

To

MARY, HOWARD, RAYMOND AND DIXON

this little book is inscribed by their often uncomprehending and unreasonable, but
always loving

FATHER

"I took for granted all his kindly ways,
I only knew I liked him best of all,
And that the days I spent with him were golden days.
He was so big, and I so very small,
I never knew just why he liked to be my pal
In days so long ago.
The picture that he saw, I could not see,
The future dreams he dreamed, I could not know."

PREFACE

In the flood of recent books on the newer and popular aspects of analytical psychology, the opinion is unanimously expressed, that most of the nervous and mental disorders of adult life can be traced back to some error in the management of the very early years of childhood. In view of this consensus of opinion, it has been disappointing to find so little in the way of concrete suggestions to parents, in these books written avowedly for the laity, either as to what they should do, or what they should avoid doing. It has not been possible to find a book to recommend to inquiring fathers and mothers, in a practice devoted exclusively to children and their problems in health and in disease, which would do two simple things: first, give in clear, understandable terms an explanation of the cardinal principles of the newer psychology; and then, apply these principles in such a

manner as would enable parents the better to understand their own children. This book has been written to supply such a need. If it makes the task of parenthood easier, it will have justified its existence. If not, it will have failed, no matter how readable an exposition of the principles of the newer psychology it may present.

INTRODUCTION

THE doctor who devotes himself exclusively to children, and so comes to regard adults solely as the parents, nurses, or teachers of his little patients, eventually finds himself in rather an unenviable situation. On the one hand, he has gradually, and at long last, come to learn something (albeit so painfully little!) about the manner of thinking of his small charges. On the other hand, he realizes how appallingly ignorant most parents are of the ways of thinking and feeling of their own children. And in the hands of these adults lies the making or marring of the malleable little lives entrusted to their care. Most discouraging of all, he finds in the vast majority of instances, that such adults are hopelessly ignorant of the fact of their own ignorance!

The doctor then is like one in a nightmare, who sees some terrible tragedy impending, and yet cannot warn those about to be overwhelmed by

it. And unlike other nightmares, this is one from which there is no awakening. For between the little children for whom he would be advocate, and those elders upon whose acts hang their fate in life, he beholds a great gulf fixed, one almost too great to be spanned. He sees mental or physical slowness, mistaken for stubbornness; he sees inability to comprehend, punished as actual unwillingness to learn. Worst of all, he sees the emotional outbursts that result from physical and mental exhaustion, set down as instances of ill-temper and insubordination, calling for strict disciplining and punishment; rather than as the direct results of overstrain, to be overlooked, minimized, and guarded against in the future.

Not that parents are wittingly unjust,—far from it. They simply lack a technical knowledge of the complex and highly involved nervous and emotional mechanism with which they are called upon to deal. And so, as occurs wherever ignorance attempts to tamper with complicated machinery, they have to pay an enormous toll in wasted effort, misapplied energy, and heartbreaking friction. This toll, which is exacted from parents as well as from children, might be greatly

decreased, were parents to follow the perfectly obvious and rational course of studying the minds of their children, in the light of the newest and soundest knowledge available to them.

Immeasurably greater though the cost is to the child, still the parents' share in the toll is by no means inconsiderable. Can you imagine self-reproach keener than that of a conscientious parent who should discover, say, that he had been punishing a child for disobedience to a command which had gone unheard because of an unsuspected deafness? Or that he had been punishing a child for disobedience in failing to sit still for a given length of time, when he afterward learned that sitting still was physiologically quite as impossible as it would have been for the child to jump over the moon? Such examples may seem rare or overdrawn. Unfortunately, they are among the slightest of the injustices that are daily and hourly being perpetrated upon little children, by parents who would not wittingly harm a hair of their heads! And yet through their very ignorance, they are marring the lives of their children in ways whose far-reaching effects can hardly be realized, much less remedied. Cynical as it may

sound, it is no exaggeration to say that misunderstanding and lack of comprehension are far, far commoner between children and their parents, than are sympathy and accord.

Failing to find education for parenthood in the schools, the next source of help for seeking parents would naturally seem to be in the flood of books on popular and applied psychology, psychoanalysis, child study and child psychology that have of late been issuing from the press. Unfortunately, if the inquiring parent's equipment of educational or scientific lore be limited, he will be disappointed to find, in spite of this wealth of fascinating books, an almost complete failure to meet his needs. The non-technical, garden variety of parent, unfamiliar with the vernacular of psychology old or recent, is distinctly out of his depth. "Complex" and "libido," "conation" and "cognition," "defence reaction," "apperception," and "sublimation," assail him with appalling frequency and staggering impact. If he persist in his quest long enough to gain some familiarity with these and a hundred more technical terms and unfamiliar ideas and conceptions, they will of course eventually lose their awesomeness. At first, however,

they frighten and discourage; and thus fail to deliver their message where it is most needed, and should meet with the most favorable response.

Another difficulty for the newly interested parent, is that most of these books immediately confront him with certain assumptions with which he has no sort of acquaintance, and in which he has certainly no sort of belief. Take for instance the importance that is commonly attached to dreams! To have serious conclusions drawn from this hitherto disregarded or lightly considered subject, children's dreams, rouses in the minds of many such parents a distinct feeling of resentment. Then again the cold-blooded pouncing upon sex, in so many of these books, whether or not this be the all-important factor that some believe it to be, has had the unfortunate effect of making many of them seem far-fetched, exaggerated, and unconvincing. The unfamiliar terminology has made the subject seem unnecessarily crude and repulsive; and there has been no attempt to adapt the material to these new readers.

In trying to fill this gap, it has seemed wise to lay down certain guiding principles to be followed; lest the little book that results fail of its purpose,

and simply add another to the long list already available. First, the suggestions made must be so simple and so clearly worded, that a parent with no other preparation than that involved in his *being* a parent, can and will read the volume through without a sense of effort or fatigue. Secondly, the author must employ no technicalities, except such as are explained in the text itself, and such as tend to make the subject clearer, rather than cloudier. Thirdly, the book must deal only with subjects that will be of practical assistance to one whose sole interest in psychology lies in such practical assistance in the job of raising a child. And fourthly, with so much undisputed material available that all authorities agree upon, it must refrain entirely from raising disputed points, no matter how tempting such by-ways may seem.

So much then for the manner of presenting our material. But what of our subject matter? This must include the merest sketch of some of the most important of the cardinal principles of what we may call "the newer knowledge of psychology," for want of a better term. This is an accumulated body of knowledge that tells us how

folks think, feel, and act, in the ordinary relations of life; how and why they buy, sell, study, play, save, dress up, make love, worship. It is far removed from the dry formal stuff that we learned about in college under the name "Psychology." It puts meaning and reason into the age-old conflict between youth and their elders, brought down to date in our post-war problem of "flapperism," —a condition that seems so modern, and is really so ancient. It helps us to understand why men fight for country, and why they rob for self and family. And it gives us some rational and sensible explanation of the madness of present-day merry-making, and of the jerky cadences of jazz! From such portions of the accumulated knowledge of the race as have been made accessible to us, this little book must try to present so much as may be invaluable to those of us who are parents, by the knowledge it can impart and the wisdom it can create, for our task of guiding our children past the pitfalls with which the twentieth century is surrounding them. Perhaps the most impressive lesson it will present us with, is a thought that we shall not care to entertain,—and yet time and time again, beyond the shadow of a doubt, it has

been shown to be true. This is, that most of the neuroses, (the nervous fears and minor mental twists and quirks, that we observe among our friends and acquaintances, and that make human kind so hard to get along with), have been traced back to single or repeated childhood impressions, *at the latest, before the age of six years!* Think of it! Many of us parents do not even begin to think of the question of education for our children, until they are six. And here come these meddlesome mental doctors, who tell us that before this age has been reached, the main "character trends," as they call the broad classifications of temperament, have been irrevocably fixed and set; and that lifelong injuries have been inflicted upon these little minds, that we have hardly begun to consider in any degree receptive to permanent influences. If all this be true,—and countless recorded case-histories attest its truth,—then the prevention of such harmful impressions, with their indelible effects upon the future lives of our children, is something that we parents can safely entrust to no one but ourselves. If some knowledge of these broad principles can help to save these sensitive infant minds and souls from the

blighting effects of such dangerous early impressions, then in common decency we as parents can do no less than acquire a bowing acquaintance with the new psychology that deals with such matters. For we must not wait to be concerned with the *cure* of our children *after* they have become neurotic adults. The *prevention* of such conditions, and the formation in their stead of the fine, sane, type of character that we like to call American, in the best sense of the word, is the service that we must render our children, if we are to be worthy the name of parents.

An earnest but sadly perplexed mother once said, after attempting to get light on the education of her two little boys: "But, Doctor, I read and read and read these books that you recommend. They are intensely interesting; but when I lay them down, after I have read of the awful things that may happen if I *don't* bring up my boys according to the dictates of modern psychology, I find myself absolutely at a loss as to what I *should do*. They are so stimulating,—but I don't know quite what they stimulate me to *do!*"

This test of concreteness and practicality, then, must be the first touchstone by which

the value of this volume is appraised. If it tells an anxious father definitely what to do, and actually how to do it, it fulfills its purpose. If it leaves its reader in a sort of hazy, vague state, as of wanting to go in a certain direction without having the slightest idea how to start, then it fails. Then, too, its pages should put into practice the rules it lays down for teaching, and thus make its lessons so attractive to its readers that they cannot help taking them in, rather than expecting them to stick at the job as a bit of "mental discipline." Prohibitions must be avoided,—for parent readers, as well as for pupil children; and the elements of pride and interest, rather than those of fear and shame, must be enlisted. Last of all, while it may be necessary to report cases as warnings,—as "horrible examples," if you will,—still the emphasis throughout must be upon the hopeful and constructive side of the ledger. For, the parents for whom this book is written, are such as go to make up the practice of a children's doctor anywhere,—those whose offspring are quite "normal," but who stand every bit as greatly in need of help and sound counsel, as those whose little ones are beyond

preventive care, and must be turned over to institutional treatment. The book must stand or fall by the quality of service it brings to the ordinary American father and mother.

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PARENTHOOD AND THE NEWER PSYCHOLOGY

I

PARENTHOOD AND THE NEWER PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER I

THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD—LOVE

The first thing that this newer psychology teaches us, is something so old, so self-evident, almost so hackneyed, that one hesitates to advance it as something needing mention at all. It is this, —that Love is the greatest thing in the world! Not such a "discovery," you will admit,—nor a matter to be considered as either strikingly new, shockingly revolutionary, or sternly forbidding. And yet, when much has been boiled down and abstracted from the mass of words that have been uttered and written about the new psychology, this is just about the sum and substance of one

of the underlying principles of the fascinating science. "But," you will ask, "what do you mean by LOVE? That is such a very big word. Do you mean love of wife,—of sweetheart,—of friend,—of home,—or of country? Then, there is love of parents, and love of children. Is *that* what you mean? Or there is self-love; and love of wrong or forbidden things. You cannot of course mean *all* these kinds of love?"

And yet, as a matter of fact, I do mean just that very thing. First, that love is a vast, primal force having many phases, many aspects, many stages; all of them, totally dissimilar as they may seem to us in their manifestations, yet in reality part and parcel of the same mighty, elemental force. When one comes to examine this statement carefully, it seems at first sight impossible of demonstration. And yet there is something so rational, so sane, about such a conception, that it is well worth while studying it to see if it can, after all, be true. Take the infant:—how he rejoices, after he has slept, and been tubbed and fed, in the mere luxury of stretching and using his muscles. It may seem like a far cry; but the observer skilled in detecting and appraising emotion has

called this infantile delight in the sensation of muscular wellbeing, actually the first stage in the development of love! (Reserve judgment on this,—it doesn't sound very convincing, I know; but we shall keep it tabulated, for future reference!) Next, look at the year-or-more-old baby; how delighted he is with his own body! He loves to display it, quite unabashed at his nakedness; and he is greatly interested, and not at all embarrassed, in contemplating all the physical acts and functions that he performs with it,—sometimes to the considerable embarrassment of his elders! In other words, he evinces a perfectly patent love of his own physical body,—quite like to that of Narcissus of the old mythology, who fell so in love with his image reflected in the clear pool, that no later love could affect him. Hence the term "Narcissism" has been invented to describe this stage. As he grows older, and reaches the "run-about" age, his little love reaches out to its first outside object; and fixes first upon his mother, and, later on, his father, to love supremely. As his circle of acquaintances widens, he begins to find those who resemble mother and father in their relationship to himself; and these he adds,—uncle

or aunt, elder brother or sister,—to his list of love objects. As he grows older still, he begins to realize that there are other men as wise and powerful as his father, and other women as beautiful and dear as his mother; and as environment throws such additional folk in his way, he comes to love them, too, achieving thus quite a marked advance in the range of his ability to love.

Now comes that great alchemist of the affections,—adolescence; and the boy's mother suddenly wakes to find that her little fellow, whose every thought she has fondly (though of course, quite erroneously), believed to be known to her, has fallen violently in love with his marvelous school teacher,—several years his senior, by the way! Next, perhaps, it is his maiden aunt, or perhaps the attractive young matron friend of his mother's, who is the recipient of his wandering but steadily developing affections. At college, his errant fancy may light with burning intensity upon a chorus girl, or upon an upper-class co-ed,—or perhaps upon a chapel soprano, according to his particular bent. Or, it may be the matronly wife of a much honored professor, who aids in carrying along the torch of his affections.

At last, prepared by these various, successive stages in his love life (each episode carrying him on a step further toward his unthought-of goal, from earliest infancy to young manhood), he finally falls in love with the young woman whom time, chance, and circumstances combine to picture to him as the ideal wife. If he is fortunate, he brings to this union the perfect contribution of each of his preliminary experiences, not one of which but has brought out a phase of his character that was necessary to this eventual fruition. In the same way, in inanimate nature, the blossom and the fruit come only after the tree has gone through all the changes that Nature has ordained for it.

It is one of the great lessons that the newer psychology has for us—perhaps the most valuable lesson—that such an orderly developing love-life is not merely the matter-of-fact, sometimes troublesome succession of experiences that we have always considered it to be. *It is the normal, indispensable carrying on and carrying out of the biological purpose for which the individual was designed!* As such, its successful fruition spells emotional completeness, a wholly

essential factor in a successful life. Of course, we know that there are many, many individuals whose life story does not lead up to this perfect summation, this ideal climax and perfect conclusion. But it is essential, in order for a life to be satisfactory and satisfying, that there be no arrest in this developmental unfolding, of such a nature that a perfect conclusion *might not* eventuate, *given favorable conditions and circumstances!* Of course, marriage may not be by any means the ideal thing, actually, that we have assumed it to be, biologically; and the unmarried man or woman may, by finding a compensating engrossing interest, be far happier than many a married person. But what sort of arrest could there be, you may ask (other than the failure of "the time, the place and the girl!"), that could serve to render such a perfect result unattainable?

It is right here that the villain enters. And he is no imaginary, stage villain, either; but a very commonly encountered marplot, whose machinations can easily, and do very frequently, spell tragedy to the hero or heroine. If (and this is one of the big conceptions in the newer psychology that is of special interest and importance for parents)

something happens to arrest the even tenor of the emotional development that we have been considering, and anchors or "fixates" the individual at any stage of this development short of its perfect consummation, we have an obstacle that will prevent his ever reaching that consummation at all. Of course, some fortunate interference, like a successful psychoanalysis, or some soul-shaking religious experience, may occur to lift him past and over it. For such "fixations" at immature stages of the *emotional* life (which, it must be thoroughly understood, has nothing whatsoever to do with immature stages of *physical* or *mental* or *intellectual* development, except for the distinctly harmful effect it may have upon the individual's life along these other lines), such fixations have been found to spell tragedy, in the lives of the multitudes of persons that have suffered from them. In each case, the tragedy has been in greater or less degree, according to the individual concerned, and all his predispositions and surrounding circumstances. These fixations are the prolific causes of the neuroses in later life,—those depressions, idiosyncrasies, and aberrations that make some persons so hard for their

friends to get along with,—and that make life such a burden for themselves to bear. We shall have to consider them in some detail, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE GREATEST DANGER IN OUR LIVES—ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

Now, what are some of the causes of these fixations of which we were talking at the close of the last chapter? For unless we, as parents, teachers, and physicians, can protect our children from the occurrence of such unfortunate arrests in their development, our study of the subject will merely be an academic gesture, and can in no sense serve either ourselves or the little ones placed in our care. Further than this, we shall find ourselves in the ridiculous and untenable position, of nurturing and tending the *bodies* and *minds* of these developing lives,—only to leave their *souls*, the inmost vital, undying element, untended and neglected. It is right here, then, that we shall leave theory, as we promised to do just as soon as possible, and take up the practical side of our problem.

What produces a fixation? We shall have more to say on this subject, when we come to the chapter in which we discuss the family. The family,—what a hot-bed for the development of the neuroses; what a peerless garden for the growth of character and life! For the child there is no other flowering place comparable to it! But here we may say that anything that prevents a child from *living through* to the utmost degree the emotions and sensations appropriate to his age,—or anything, on the other hand, that tends to detain him *too long* at any immature stage of his emotional development,—may easily constitute a cause for the establishment of a *fixation*. Another common cause is the occurrence of any emotional shock that suddenly and unexpectedly thrusts upon a child a change in values affecting the things or the people with whom he has been surrounded. Still other causes for the development of fixations (and of that other group of mystic import, the complexes), we shall take up later on.

Here, for the sake of concreteness and definiteness, let us sketch some of the things that may happen anywhere along the line that we roughly

surveyed out, in the chapter: *Love, the Greatest Thing in the World.* If as parents we are forewarned with reference to what may occur, and if we know what perils to prepare for, we shall have time and opportunity to forearm ourselves in some practical way against them. With such armament we may the better avoid the evils that we have been considering, evils that otherwise might come upon us unawares and unprepared.

There are, then, two opposite ways in which a child may suffer a fixation at an immature stage in his emotional life. The first is by being denied an opportunity to *live through* an experience, at the time that such an experience is normally to be expected. The second, which is the exact opposite of this, is for him to *over-emphasize*, or *prolong*, an emotional stage. This may occur by our devoting too much attention to it. Let us examine each of the various stages that we have considered; and see how we may cause, or avoid causing, a fixation, by our way of handling these stages as they develop.

First, we have an example of a cessation of development (a "fixation"), at the "muscle erotism" stage, that of love of the mere animal sensation

of muscular action and muscular contraction, in the professional athlete, whose whole life interest and conception of being centers in the use of his body for the mere pleasure of physical sensation. Next, the narcissistic period. How may this and the "muscle erotism" stage be wrongly handled? A mother may prudishly rebuke the perfectly natural and normal manifestations of this age,—may try to shame the child when he stands before the mirror, genuinely enjoying the sight of his naked little torso, or of the various contortions into which he can twist his eager little face. In other words, she does her best to prevent his *living through to the utmost* this perfectly natural and legitimate emotion,—which, thus satisfied and discharged, is expended and done with, and takes its place in the perfectly normal past history of his emotional life. She may, on the other hand, be tempted to join with him in his admiration, —she may exclaim aloud over the lovely little body; she may even have that photographic monstrosity taken, the nude baby picture that we have all seen in the parlors of our friends and acquaintances. To assume either of these attitudes is bad. The phase, which is quite transient,

should be allowed to run its due course, without receiving either reproof or special attention. For examples of those who have been improperly treated during this stage, in the light of this conception, we have only to look about us, to find friends and acquaintances who, we can now realize, have never wholly emerged from the narcissistic stage. The "dude" (as we used to call him a generation ago), and the shallow-pated "flapper" (in the worst sense of this much-abused word), as well as the wife who spends the greater part of her husband's income in decorating (without unduly concealing!), her body,—these are still in the narcissistic stage. They have never really emerged from the period of self-love. Hence, they can never satisfactorily pass on to maturer emotional stages, because this necessary preliminary, preparative stage has never been lived out.

In all this discussion, however, we must not lose sight of the very interesting fact that it is perfectly natural and normal for us to live through these experiences, and to retain something of each of these emotional tones, which permanently colors our later adult self. For instance, we know the exhilarating sensation that comes to all of us, at one

time or another, when perfect physical fitness is experienced. This is not a *fixation* from the period of muscle-satisfaction. It is a perfectly normal *persistence of a tinge or tone derived from* that stage. Although it now bears a subordinate rôle in our life, it yet is of very great importance in contributing its coloring toward our well-functioning, present-day adult self.

The same thing may be said of the normal persistence of a certain touch, or tinge, of the stage of self-love (or "narcissistic" stage). A certain degree of personal pride,—"amour propre," self-respect,—is indispensable in the well-rounded life. Without it, a man would be a slovenly, unlovely, unkempt creature, who could attain to neither success nor satisfaction. This is but the *normal residuum from the narcissistic stage*, a contribution quite essential to well-rounded manhood or womanhood. If a real *fixation* has occurred at this level, on the other hand, we have the self-centered individual whom we all know, whose life spells failure because he never can look beyond the satisfaction of his love of clothes, his appetite, his bodily comforts, to see the greater satisfaction that would be his, were he to sacrifice some of these,

and found a family of his own. We say that so-and-so is too conceited, or too selfish, or too self-centered, ever to marry. What we really mean, is that his ability to live and to love has never got beyond the self-love stage, to a point from which it can project itself upon objects outside itself,—for instance, upon a wife, or children, or the community.

Next comes the period of the all-engrossing love of the mother. Perfectly natural as this is, it demands sane handling, and the steering of a course midway between the two extremes that we have been considering. Suppose, to take the first, less common danger, there is some reason why the mother bitterly resents the birth of the baby. She may already have too many children; a girl may have come when a boy was ardently desired; comparative poverty may compel the father and mother to do without certain necessities, or luxuries that have become necessities. Or, now that another child has come, suppose there is *actual* poverty, that prevents the mother from spending more than a minimum of time with the child because she has to be absent at work. It may even happen that there is no home at all left;

and that the child is sent to an orphan asylum for rearing. The normal amount of affection, to which every child is inalienably entitled, never comes to such a child at all. The lack of a reasonable, normal, justifiable amount of cuddling, petting, and "mothering," has been held to be the cause of the high death rate that invariably occurs in even the best of hospitals for infants. When for any reason a baby is deprived, even in early infancy, of this maternal solicitude which is his due, there is inflicted a definite injury, whose results may, and probably will, last as long as the life of the individual. This is one of the most serious indictments against the old-time orphan asylum; and it is the underlying reason for the great superiority of the present-day boarding-out system, which is gradually replacing the unnatural older method of taking care of children by wholesale, or in job lots. To a much lesser degree, of course, we see the emotionally undernourished child of ultra-particular parents, who never cuddle or fondle him because of an idea that it is not "scientific" and "up-to-date" to permit such handling of a baby, or who fear that he may become infected with "germs," by such treatment!

A far commoner way of mismanaging this period, is of course to go to the other extreme that we call "spoiling." It is never too early for an infant to learn the necessity of certain rules and regulations for his guidance, and that of the rest of the family; and to gain the sustaining, steadying support that comes of a sensible regimen carefully and conscientiously carried out. The household whose regular routine is sacrificed to the whim of an infant or child, makes the worst possible seeding ground for the neuroses in later life. "Spoiling" is so easy to start, and so hard to stop later on, that the importance of preventing it cannot be overestimated. It is just here that a children's physician with an adequate conception of his task, can be of great help to young parents. It is so common to see the utmost care used in sterilizing the baby's bottles, and to see no expense spared for providing proper clothing, equipment, and ventilation; while the mental and emotional life of the child, is left totally unconsidered. This is the time for the most judicious blending of firmness with mother love; remembering all the time, however, that the duty of the mother is not only to satisfy the affectional cravings of her baby

at the moment, but also to direct those cravings *away from herself* and *toward others*,—which is what nature intends for the young of the species.

We have not time here to consider the special dangers that beset the "only child." He is a problem by himself; and one the consideration of which is becoming more and more insistent, as his number becomes legion, owing to the increased economic pressure which in these days is making the acquisition of a family an almost prohibitive luxury. The physician whose attitude invites confidences, is constantly meeting with young parents who, much as they desire to have three or four children, feel that they simply cannot face the economic strain of having more than one. The only child deserves a whole chapter to himself. For his life is one of exceptional emotional strain and stress; his problems are entirely distinct from those of children who are subjected to wholesome contact with their brothers and sisters; and his handling constitutes a subject that merits the most careful and painstaking consideration.

The results of fixations at this stage are too well known to need more than passing mention. We are familiar with the "mama's boy," the Faunt-

leroy type, who is so beautiful and attractive in a book, but so insufferable when met with in real life! In the last analysis, he is the product of a mother-love so selfish, so exclusive, that his affections have never been allowed to develop beyond the confines of her all-absorptive cravings. There may often be traced a quite understandable cause for this in the mother's own love-life, (the removal by death of a loving husband, and the loneliness of a young widowhood; or perhaps the even more tragic alienation of the love of a still living husband), which has made her turn for compensation to an only or specially loved child. Whatever the cause, we see in the boy or girl fixated at the stage of mother-love preëmption, an individual marked for some of the unkindest experiences that can be presented by fate. Extreme sensitiveness, overwhelming homesickness at the slightest provocation, persecution at the hands of the sturdier little rascals with whom the child is thrown while at school or at play, are some of the least of his troubles. Such an individual will never be able to consummate a happy marriage, the biological end for which we agreed that every individual was fore-ordained, and the emotional acme of human

experience. For such a one has never learned to love; he is absolutely lacking in the ability to love, —in the self-forgetting and self-sacrificing way in which mature love functions. Beautiful and romantic in fiction as such instances of extreme attachments to parents appear, or alluring in the telling, they are blighting in real life. The young man who is "his mother's sweetheart,"—"so comfortably fixed at home that he does not need to marry,"—the young woman who loves her father so devotedly that she cannot listen to the honest, struggling young fellow of her own age who loves her; are examples of this doting relationship carried to unfortunate but almost inevitable ends. These unfortunate individuals present a sorry sight, ten or twenty years later. They are irritable, dissatisfied, wholly incapacitated for a happy middle age, or later life; at a time when their bolder, or more normal, friends and acquaintances, who were willing to take the plunge and make the necessary sacrifice of economic comfort, are coming into their heritage of happy married life, with satisfying mates, and sturdy, rollicking, hearty children.

Let the wise mother, then, remember the words of the Baptist with regard to his Lord: "He must

increase, but I must decrease." And let her try constantly to lead out ("e-duc-ate") the love of her child, away from herself, first toward the father, and later toward the other adults in the family who come closest into contact with him,—nurse, uncle or aunt, elder brother or sister, grandparents, family friends. Let her have no fear lest there be not love enough and to spare for herself as well as for all these others. For the love emanating from the heart of a little child grows by exercise; and there will be no lack of overplus for the unselfish mother who thus spends her child's growing and developing affections, instead of hoarding them for her own miserly and short-sighted use. Overindulgence in physical contact, such as is involved in the too ardent caressing of the little child, is also to be carefully considered, at this time. Just as the gardener's "forcing" of his little plants by giving them too much heat at an immature age in the hothouse, produces growths that bloom prematurely and rapidly wither, without ever attaining to a strong, vigorous maturity; so can these little lives be "forced" to a premature emotional pseudo-maturity far beyond what is appropriate to their years and physical growth.

This is accompanied by a resultant loss in happiness and efficiency, that can be appreciated only by the expert in mental diseases who is consulted years later, and who is then asked to salvage a life that is by that time far beyond his power to save.

There are a host of practicalities that crowd the mind of the children's doctor, as he considers the best way to counsel enquiring parents. As a necessity then, he has to select what seem to him the most important, at the risk of omitting almost equally pressing points; for he cannot hope to cover the whole field. As he thinks upon the next stage in the love-life of the child, the very interesting question comes up of the dangers inherent in a father fixation. These perils, for the girl, have been hinted at above.

For the boy, we have as before two extremes to avoid. The first is perhaps more frequently a peril in the case of the son, than in that of the daughter. For, whether we like to believe it or not, there is undoubtedly a very definite element of jealousy, usually quite unrecognized by any of the actors, operative in the reaction of father and son toward the object of their common affection, the wife and mother. Unless this is recognized and

handled very wisely by both father and mother, a situation is apt to arise that is fraught with serious possibilities, both at the time, and later on. For as the weaker, and also the less articulate of the two, the son is tempted to feel that he is the loser in the contest for his mother's affection,—even though we elders know that the reverse is quite apt to be true; and that the father, at least for the time being, often comes out second best in the contest. Because of his feeling of inferiority and helplessness, and the more insidiously because his elders are so completely unaware of it from his silence, the son may conceive a blind, unuttered, unreasoning hatred and resentment against his father. Whether this is ever expressed, or as is far more likely to be the case, is buried in the unconscious and never actively realized as a fact, it may later in life break out in some form very far removed from anything visibly related to the actual state of affairs. Far-fetched as it may seem, we have come to realize that much of the resentment manifested in school against the authority of the teacher (especially if the teacher be a man), and even, later on, against all authority of society, church, and state, can be traced back to

some such resentment conceived in early childhood against the father.

The practical lesson for both father and mother at this point, is to exercise the greatest of care in showing their affection for each other,—especially in the form of indulging in over-ardent caresses before their children. In addition, it is advisable to avoid wherever possible any direct conflict between father and son. Let the ends of discipline be gained as much as possible by the indirect routes of reason and appeal, rather than to allow things to reach the point of a "show-down." Superior force on the part of the father is always a confession of his failure to handle a situation; just as a state of war is always a confession of maladroit diplomacy.

The opposite danger, that of too great coddling of a boy by his father, is not nearly so apt to occur. What does happen not infrequently, however, is such coddling on the part of a father toward a daughter, sometimes even to the point of unwise indulgence in physical caresses. One of the harmful results of this sort of thing has been alluded to before, in the case of the girl who refuses to fall in love because "no man is as good as

father." Touchingly filial and hence admirable as this may seem, it always has a strain of the distinctly pathological running through it. Unsuccessful marriages, if marriage does take place in spite of this handicap, are often traceable to this cause. For a young man is quite apt to feel that he is entitled to the love of his wife *as a wife*, rather than to be forced to compete with an elderly rival for the love of a daughter—with all the odds on the side of the older, wealthier, and more polished opponent!

Another practical phase of this question has to do with boarding schools, for both boys and girls. This brings to the fore one of the rather disagreeable sides of our discussion. Yet it is one which must be touched upon, inasmuch as it has to do with the preparation of the individual for the love of his eventual mate of the opposite sex. This boarding school question involves the preparatory stage of love for individuals of the same sex. This has of course been quite frankly stated, in the preceding chapter, in which we considered the successive stages in the love life of the child, who passes through periods of love for the parent of the *same* as well as of the *opposite* sex, and later

for parent-substitutes of *both* sexes. If for any reason the love of the child is allowed to become fixated at a level at which it is centered upon a person of the *same* sex, we have a situation which is going to make impossible any normal, mature love of a mate of the *opposite* sex, later on. This is the very real danger inherent in what are called at some girls' boarding schools and colleges, "U. F's" (unhealthy friendships). It is one whose evil effects all of us have seen in our own circle of acquaintances, if we have not refused to recognize such instances, as we have a way of doing with things that are too unpleasant for conscious consideration (see Chapter VII, Phantasy versus Reality).

This situation in its grosser physical forms is one which frequently crops out in scandals connected with boy's boarding schools, boy choirs, European army circles, and ship's crews on long voyages. In its symbolic form, it is commoner in girls' schools and colleges, and in women's religious and social organizations. But, however and wherever it appears, it is a distinctly unfortunate and regrettable state of affairs; and calls for the most skillful management,—not so much for

its treatment after it has become established, as for its prevention in the first place, before it ever gets a foothold at all. We must frankly recognize, if we are to handle the thing with the scientific consideration it deserves, that at certain stages of the emotional development, love for a person of the same sex is perfectly normal and to be expected; but that a *fixation* at such a level is something to be avoided and guarded against at all hazards.

To be sure, no single guaranteed rule for its avoidance can be advanced offhand. Probably the best course for ensuring the prevention of this tragedy in the emotional life, consists in the creation and maintenance of an ideal family environment. But in order for family life to be truly ideal, we must frankly recognize that there is going to come a time when the affections of the child will reach outside of the family circle to center upon other individuals of the same sex, and later upon those of the opposite sex. And this is a perfectly natural phase of development. Wise parents, then, will see to it that suitable recipients for their children's affections are always available, in the persons of wise and attractive men and women, and older boys and girls, in

their own circle of friends and guests. They must be friends who may be trusted to treat these emotional situations, when they do arise, with the delicacy and tact that they deserve. Such wise friends may be counted upon to realize the transient, evanescent, developmental character of the emotional outpourings of which they may become the temporary recipients; and to turn over these affections, developed and strengthened during their tenure of them, to the recipient next in order! On the other hand, wise parents will, as much as is possible, keep their children removed from contact with such undesirable types as might arouse these emotions for selfish ends, and use them for base and unworthy purposes of their own. This task, in the present day of the ubiquitous movie idol, and the lah-di-dah matinée hero, is one which we must not belittle. But the stake,—the normal, happy development of the emotional lives of our children,—is so well worth the playing for, that no parent will begrudge the effort, even though he may deplore the necessity for it.

Boarding school friendships, as well as ordinary day school associations, had best be subjected to the most searching, though very carefully camou-

flaged, scrutiny. They possess potentialities that are terrific for harm—and also incalculable for good. Even the highest type of teacher may occasionally come under merited suspicion, in this connection. In such a crisis, personal feelings, no matter how worthy, must not be considered; for only the most carefully managed interference and the most sustained personal interest can be relied upon to save the child from the dangers inherent in such a situation, when it does occur.

It must not be inferred from what has been said here about some of the possible dangers in the life of boarding school or college, that these things are present in *all* such institutions. The very recognition of the fact that such dangers may occur, is in itself the best possible preventive against them. No one can close his eyes to the wonderful opportunities for the formation of the most valuable friendships that can occur in a lifetime. During these impressionable days of school and college there is a frankness and lack of calculation, that is not apt to persist into later life to the same degree. But this very abandon and whole-heartedness makes it highly desirable that the friendships formed should be of a type

that will be valuable and not harmful. As with many other of the problems of life that our children must face, however, the important time to prepare is not when the condition is actually present; but long beforehand, in the early years in the home. The child who comes from a home where the whole question of emotional development has been handled in a sane, sensible way, and who has constantly had opportunities of meeting suitable and desirable people for friends, is pretty well inoculated against the dangers to which he will be sure to be exposed during the adolescent years in school and college, when the restraining influences of home can operate only at a distance, and not through direct contact.

CHAPTER III

THE STRANGEST THING IN THE WORLD —OUR CONSCIOUSNESS

ONE of the cardinal principles that we as parents have to learn, if we are to apply for our children's benefit the things that the newer psychology has to offer us, is one that is completely at variance with our ordinary conception of mind. But there seems to be no manner of doubt, among those whose studies have best qualified them to speak with authority, that the mind of any person, child, or adult, is made up of the sum total of all the experiences through which he has passed since birth, plus every impression that has ever touched him in passing, no matter how fleeting and transitory some of these may have seemed. That is to say, that every thought, feeling, experience, or image that has ever impinged upon one's consciousness becomes, once and for all, a component part

of a great, constantly growing, indestructible body, his mind,—which is to say, his real self. A moment's thought will show us how impossible it would be for any human being to stagger through life with such a load of unrelated, undigested material clogging up his thinking apparatus. In order for us to function at all, it is necessary to subordinate some of these impressions (as the artist does with his background and less important figures); while we allow others to stand out in greater or less relief (as he does with the main figures in his composition). In the case of our minds, we accomplish this by the process of *forgetting*. That is to say, we force back or down out of sight the things that we do not need, or do not wish, to remember and use; while we allow others that we *do* want to use, to stand out in their original force and clearness. In other words, we remember, (that is to say, we *fail to suppress*, or *forget*), them.

This reversal of the ordinary conception of memory and forgetting,—that *forgetting* is the *active* or positive part of the process, while *remembering* is not active at all, but merely a failure to suppress,—is very far-reaching and important.

The tiny portion of this overwhelmingly vast storehouse of impressions that occupies the foreground at any given moment of time,—that "receives our attention," or "occupies our mind," as we phrase it,—may be said to constitute our "consciousness," or our "conscious self." The remainder of this mass of stuff (some of it catalogued in an orderly way, so that it may be summoned for our use when needed; the rest of it a hopeless jumble of related and unrelated impressions, which can be got at only after painful effort, if at all) makes up what we call, for want of a better, less technical term, our "unconscious self,"—or, more familiarly, the "unconscious."

To repeat, then,—the "unconscious" makes up all the rest of our mind,—those vast unexplored depths of the ocean of experiences that we have lived through since birth. Some think it even includes experiences before birth, as well as the accumulated experiences of the race! Our total experiences from birth, then, down to the present moment, together with all the impressions that have ever touched us in all those years,—all this makes up our "unconscious." If we were to keep to this figure, and liken the conscious to the

surface of an ocean, the vastly greater extent of the *volume* of its waters might well be compared to the unconscious.

The unconscious, to shift the figure, is an ever-retentive storehouse, in which is preserved everything which has ever entered the mind through any of the avenues of sensation, or has had its birth from within it,—both external and internal, that is. Most of what we have experienced has been forgotten, but though forgotten, is still operative in our minds, ever striving to return to consciousness. No matter how trivial, every thought and every perception is stored in its original shape in the unconscious. The appearance of everything we ever saw, the sound of everything we ever heard, the feeling of everything we ever touched, all these are registered, in the billion or so cells in the brain, like negatives on a photographic film. Many of them always remain undeveloped, preserving their unconscious state forever. But some of them may be developed later on, as the photographer's fluid develops the picture sleeping in the celluloid film.

This whole conception of mind and its functioning is so contrary to anything that most of us have

ever conceived of as being the case, that it is well to see whether it is worth while or necessary, for us whose sole interest in psychology is that of parents looking for help in the rearing of our children, to bother our heads about it at all. As a matter of fact, there is probably not one single conception in the whole field of thought, so full of help to a father or mother anxious to understand what is going on in the mind of son or daughter, as this same hypothesis of the unconscious, with its paramount influence upon the life and well-being of the individual. On the other hand, an acceptance of this strangely unfamiliar idea, and the corollaries that go with it, will open up wholly undreamed-of vistas, as we go along. So let us try to accept it on faith, simply as a working basis, without expecting to grasp its whole content, or to be able to believe it implicitly, at first. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this one cardinal principle of the newer psychology. One need not hope to be able to grasp its whole significance at one time,—in fact, it will be a long time before he can quite reconcile it with many of his previously held tenets regarding the entire basis of life and thought. As he begins

to apply it to his problems as they come along, however, and to see how wonderfully well it explains so many of the things that without it have been quite inexplicable, he will gradually begin to sense the importance of the new idea, with much of the significance that lies back of it.

Without forgetting our promise to employ no more theory than is essential, in these practical aids to parenthood, it will be necessary to go just a step further in our consideration of this matter of consciousness and the unconscious. We sometimes speak of the "stream of thought." The newer psychology has taught us that we were using a pretty accurate and exact figure of speech, in so doing. For it is the opinion of the best-informed workers in this field, that, from the birth of an individual to the moment of his death, there is never a break in the continuous stream or flow of his thought processes. Of course, we know that there are many breaks in *conscious* thought. Every time we drop off to sleep; when we have to take an anesthetic; when delirium occurs; when a drug, or alcoholic intoxication, renders one temporarily unconscious; at these and other times the *conscious* mind goes off duty, and we are no longer

cognizant of our existence. But there seems no good reason to doubt that at all times the unconscious is actively on duty. Our heart, our lungs, and the countless glands and other bodily organs, go on functioning quite as usual, directed adequately by the controlling unconscious. And "dreams," whatever the true nature of these much discussed manifestations may be, are forever streaming through our minds, even though on becoming conscious again we may feel quite sure that we have not dreamed at all, and that our minds have been quite vacant and unoccupied during the interlude of unconsciousness that we call sleep.

It is not an unfair or inaccurate statement of the case, then, to say that we are possessed of *two minds*. For this is about as near to the truth as we can come in our limited knowledge of this strange, mysterious self of ours. True, most of us are entirely ignorant of the very existence of this "sub rosa mind" that we have been discussing; though all through history, literature, drama, and folklore, and in our common, everyday speech, we find evidences cropping out of some belief in the unconscious. There seems always to have been

a sort of sneaking notion in the back of man's mind, that there was something more at work within him than the relatively familiar and tangible mentality that he knew so much about. Just what sort of creatures are these two minds? Can we compare them, and get a working conception of them, before going on to consider how a knowledge of their existence can help us as parents in dealing with the problems set us by our children?

The conscious mind, the one with which we are relatively familiar, is a sedate, respectable sort of creature, ruled largely by reason and logic. He would not do anything to offend the most fastidious, or to lower in the slightest degree the dignity of the person within whose body he dwells. We can fairly well anticipate and prophesy just about what he will do in a given set of circumstances, if we have some past performances of his to guide us.

The unconscious, on the other hand, is a child,—a savage,—a bullying school-boy,—a ruffianly, roystering, swaggering Elizabethan adventurer, who crops out uncontrolled whenever and wherever he may; and, like the proverbial bull in

the china closet, raises hob to the top of his bent. He it is who is responsible for that quaint, tricksy will-o'-the-wisp that we call our "sense of humor," —which as we know is no respecter of persons, and is quite as likely as not to pop out at the most unseasonable moments with the most unreasonable of actions, and shame us out of hand. He is responsible for those embarrassing mistakes that we make, that occur at the most inopportune of times, and that betray the very thoughts that we were most anxious to conceal, to the very people from whom we were most anxious to keep them hidden.

But how, will you say, can two such ill-assorted companions, say, as Robert Mantell and Douglas Fairbanks, or as Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, keep house together? Which one of the partners will be the guiding spirit,—and how will he secure and maintain his leadership? As in the case of many other partnerships, there is here one member who is *supposedly* the directing spirit, who speaks for the firm and makes the important decisions. But, as is likewise the case with many partnerships, it is not infrequently the *silent partner* who makes most of the really weighty decisions,

and who controls the policy of the firm in the affairs of the greatest moment. The conscious self is the one that each of us assumes to be the director, in his own case, ruling by reason and common sense. And yet it is only by dint of continual care, watchfulness, and repression that we can manage to make this even partly true. The conscious self does succeed in keeping his mad associate fairly well in hand, as a rule, by means of a repressive or regulatory device or mechanism called the "censor." This ordinarily suffices to enable him to make the unconscious toe the mark. But let the conscious self, or his highly proper assistant, the censor, so much as nod for a moment,—in sleep, in delirium, in careless, accidental "slip of tongue or pen"! Let this but happen, and all sorts of disturbing and unwelcome thoughts and actions come swirling up from the teeming unconscious depths into the light of day, to tumble across the threshold into awareness. The dream, the daydream, the babbling of delirium, the apparent sleep of anesthesia, the embarrassing "faux pas,"—all betray the primitive, unregenerate, egoistic creature that we sometimes call our "real self." This real self is

our real self only in the sense that it is our *primitive* self, unhampered by the conventions that civilization, morality, education, and religion have built up about us.

This conception of the overwhelming weight of the unreasoning, emotion-swayed unconscious, as compared with the voting strength of his reasonable, logical fellow, consciousness, will lead us to far-reaching conclusions in the fields of teaching, discipline, religion, and the daily walks of life. We have but to follow unreservedly, as well as we can, where it leads us. We have always thought of ourselves and our children as being reasonable, sensible beings, making our decisions and ordering our lives according to the dictates of sound common-sense. And many of the things we say and do, and see others saying and doing, justify us in taking this view. On the other hand, even a most cursory survey of some everyday facts and occurrences, must inevitably lead us to the conclusion that in the biggest, most vital affairs of life, it is the unreasoning, illogical, highly emotional and sentimental unconscious that casts the deciding vote. This revolutionary conception, together with a consideration of some of the phe-

nomena upon which we base the assertion, and of some of the helps in managing our children which it offers us, we must consider in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE MOST UNREASONABLE CREATURE IN THE WORLD— MAN, THE "REASONING" BEING

THE preceding chapter (that on the unconscious) may have seemed like a needlessly long dose of theory. It can be justified only if we can draw from the theories there discussed, some practical help in our self-imposed task of parenthood.

Perhaps one of the greatest causes for the friction existing between children and their parents, is the fact that the child, although supposedly a thinking and reasoning being, bases his actions for the greater part, not upon reason at all, but upon impulse and desire. When a father explains to his little son the dangers inherent in dashing out from the curb into the traffic of the busy street in pursuit of his ball, and the child

seems perfectly to comprehend his meaning and promises to obey the order, the father feels that he ought to be fairly confident of such obedience. When, then, five minutes later, the child plunges wildly out from the sidewalk in the same pursuit, and is rescued from impending destruction under the wheels of a passing truck only by a miracle, the father feels that he has been unfairly treated,—that a gentleman's agreement has been broken. And he probably considers himself quite justified when he gets relief and outlet for his outraged feelings by wreaking a very satisfying (to himself!) punishment upon the offending party to the previous understanding.

Now exactly what has happened, in the light of the theory of the unconscious that we have been considering? We saw that in the mind of the child, as in the mind of adult man during the childhood of the race, the unconscious plays a considerably more prominent part than is the case later on in life, when there has been time for a much thicker veneer of inhibitions and culture to form. As a consequence, the child acts far more impulsively, and much more independently of the restraints imposed by outside influences, than is

the case later on in life. Such inhibitions comprise reason, consideration for the rights and wishes of others, obedience, and moral scruples. When the father explained the danger so carefully, he was appealing to the child's *intellect*,—his conscious self; and he convinced the child's *intellect* only, without enlisting an iota of his *desire* or *emotional force*,—i.e., his unconscious. He may perhaps have gone deep enough into the unconscious to have appealed to his sense of fear,—always a method of questionable or doubtful value, which may lead to more harm later on, than the good hoped for at the time. But after all, the appeal of reason was to his relatively weak, undeveloped *conscious* self. When the compelling interest of his far stronger unconscious, completely absorbed in the intensely interesting play of the normal child, carried him, without conscious thought, out into the dangerous street after his suddenly bounding ball, there was no time allowed for the slower-acting *conscious* mind to call his attention to the prohibition,—which, although understood well enough at the time, had not been strengthened by any emotional appeal.

Now even if this were but a child's way of doing

things, to be outgrown by the time he reaches adult life, we parents ought to understand enough of its mechanism to sympathize with it and make allowances for it, even if we can not bring ourselves entirely to condone it. But we cannot delude ourselves, even for a moment, if we are quite honest with ourselves, with the belief that even we grown men and women are very far removed from this developmental stage in which *emotion* (or wish) triumphs over *reason*. We may conclusively prove to the medical student, out of his own books and in his own laboratories, that tobacco and alcohol are bad for the human system; we can convince intelligent, mature men and women of the dangers of excessive coffee drinking, the evils of gambling, the sinfulness of extravagance; but unless we can reach their deeper lying unconscious with some emotional appeal,—unless we can bring in something more compelling than pure logic and sheer reason,—we need hope for little reform in conduct on the part even of these more or less mature adults. Why then should we expect more of our children?

One of the phenomena of childhood that seems hardest for us parents to realize, then, is our chil-

dren's failure to be swayed by reason. A very common complaint, in the indictment of the parent against the disobedient child, is this: "I explained to him just why he must not do this (or that, or the other thing). I know he understood and followed me perfectly; and yet, after all that, he went and did the very thing I had explained that he must not do. What are you going to do with a child like that?"

Let me tell you just what *I* am going to do with a child like that. I am going to admit, if he is *my* child, that he is startlingly like his father! What, you will say? Do you mean to admit that you are not governed by reason? That you do wrong, when you understand why you ought to do right? Yes, of course, I reply. And if *you* are going to be fair and square in considering your child's problems in the light of your own, you must admit that you, too, are swayed not by reason but chiefly by your emotions, in all the big, important things in your life. If you are not willing to admit this,—as is very possibly the case, —then we shall know that you are addicted to the delightful habit of "rationalizing"—a big word, which is a high-sounding and scientific term for

that very human weakness, making excuses. But it means also something more than that,—it means making yourself believe the excuses that you make! This plays an important part in our ways of thinking; and a comprehension of it is necessary, if we are to understand our own thought processes, and those of our children. Just now, however, let us get back to this startling thought that we have just dared to touch upon:—namely, that we, thinking and reasoning creatures, the kings of the animal kingdom, the only species that by common consent are admitted to have minds at all; that we, having such minds, do not use them for reasoning out the true inwardness of things, and then act upon the results of this reasoning; but, in the big, important things of life, like marrying, and choosing our friends, are guided largely by our emotions.

Let us examine a few typical instances; and see if they will not prove this point off hand, without further argument. To illustrate: let us suppose that you are a good orthodox Baptist, a Republican, a New England Yankee. You meet, in the smoking room of a Pullman, another high-class, reputable citizen. It happens

that Providence, in its infinite wisdom, saw fit to have him open his eyes in a Presbyterian home, somewhere south of the Mason and Dixon line, in a family that fought and bled for the Lost Cause. Into the smoking room comes an Oxford graduate, a member of the Church of England, moderately conservative in his political thinking; and with him a highly cultured French cleric, who is chatting pleasantly with an Italian student of pronounced atheistic leanings. If you are all *reasoning* beings, ready to decide upon a way of living, acting and thinking, it must of course be no time at all before each one of you has given up enough of his erroneous thoughts, as a result of the arguments offered by the rest, to allow of your reaching a common platform upon which you can all unite. Religion, politics, historical bias, all will be reduced to a common formula to which all of these reason-controlled individuals can and will subscribe. For it is inconceivable that there should not be some true right on every question, though there may be any number of degrees or shades of wrong. And yet, you know quite well that even if every one of this party should try his best to save his well-grounded fellows from the various errors of

their various ways, (which of course as sensible men of the world they would certainly not be so foolish as to do)—even after such an unprofitable and strenuous evening spent in the pursuit of reason, every one of our supposedly reasonable and intellectual men would remain absolutely unchanged in his every mental tenet.

Now why is this so, you will say? Surely it would be too much to say that man is *not* a rational being,—that he cannot be persuaded to change his mind as a result of intellectual processes. Quite so. There *are* many things on which we are open to reason.

In less important matters, we do frequently entirely reverse ourselves, as a result of well marshalled arguments and reasons advanced by our fellows. More than this, there are frequently *important* things as well upon which we change our minds. It has even been known that a bred-in-the-bone Catholic has become a Protestant; and the case of Cardinal Newman, who though brought up in a strict Calvinist home, turned from Protestantism to Rome, is perfectly well-known. A careful examination of such instances as these, however, will show us that our old friend, the unconscious, is

at work in all these cases; and that in each one, emotion has triumphed over pure reason. On the other hand, wherever reason has swayed the balance, the feeling involved has been relatively slight. But how about the cases cited above, you may ask, where sheer reason has convinced a Catholic that he should renounce Catholicism, or has swung a Protestant over to Rome? Or those in which a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat has gone over to Republicanism, or a rock-ribbed Republican has become a Democrat? Such cases, if carefully examined, will be found to be anything but purely reasoned out, and free from emotion. True, the actors have usually *convinced themselves* ("rationalized" in other words) that they were acting as a result of the dictates of pure reason. But the unbiassed student, if he understands what we have mentioned before as "rationalization,"—that strange faculty possessed by all of us of fooling ourselves into believing that excuses are reasons,—will readily see that in every such case the element of emotion (the unconscious, in other words), was having its way. It was but elaborating the best-sounding excuses in the world to cover up the fact that it *was* getting its

own sweet will! "Rationalization is an ingrained habit of humanity, to give, after an action, a reason for it which is never the true cause of the action." (Wilfrid Lay.)

Why is it that most of us remain of the same faith,—religious, political, national,—as that in which we were born? Simply because of the supreme and compelling power of the family influence (emotional, not intellectual) that we have considered in detail elsewhere. Why does the son of a strong total abstainer remain practically unable to drink alcohol even moderately? Because of the compelling influence of a greatly loved father. But why, you say, is it frequently the case that just the opposite thing takes place,—that the son of the extreme teetotaller becomes a drunkard,—does not that disprove the case? Not at all. For there the hostile emotional tone produced by the fanaticism of the father has adversely affected the son, who takes a perverse delight in "spiting" his father by following the course that that father would have disapproved most bitterly. Emotional, not rational, you see. But, in order to retain our self-respect, we "rationalize" about such things. And rationalization is

"the practically universal tendency to justify our actions or our thoughts, in most cases entirely unconsciously, because we feel that they need justification or defense. We do not realize that the unconscious dictates the 'reasons' that we assign; and that they seem true to us because our unconscious wants them to seem true. That is to say: unless we are on the lookout for the actions of our (or our children's) unconscious, the great majority of the 'reasons' we assign for our actions will be nothing but pleasing 'rationalizations.' And the reasons advanced to us by our children in explaining their acts will be no more compelling. This shows how futile it is to ask a child why he did this or that 'bad' thing. He does not know. He may remain mute; he may fabricate transparent inadequate reasons; or he may give reasons so sensible-sounding as to deceive not only the teacher, but himself as well!" (Wilfrid Lay.)

But all this may seem a far cry from the plaint of the parent who bemoans the wrong-headedness of his child in persisting in doing the forbidden thing, although its essential wrongness has been explained to him. Just how *is* such a child to be

made to do what is right, if reasoning and explanation fail to sway him? The answer,—so simple to give, and yet so hard to apply in the individual instance,—is for the parent not to dwell upon the forbidden thing at all; but instead to invest with some pleasurable emotional tone the *opposite* thing,—the thing that he desires that the child *shall* do. Take a hypothetical case. A mother is terrified lest her child step down from the sidewalk into the gutter in the course of his playing, and be run over by an automobile. What is she to do? What she usually *does* do is to warn, forbid, threaten, and do everything within her power to impress upon the child the idea that something undesirable will happen if he goes into the street. Will this be effective? Perhaps it will; and perhaps, on the other hand, it will not, depending much upon the character of the child. If the youngster is of the timid, fearsome sort, it may. But a child of this sort would in all probability have been too timid to run much risk anyway; so that a mere word of counsel or of explanation, given without stressing the "horrible details," would have been quite sufficient to accomplish the purpose in view. The overempha-

sis upon the horrors of the possible catastrophe has simply succeeded in making a timid child still more timid,—surely not a desirable consummation. Suppose, on the contrary, that the child is of the more daring, impetuous type that one sees more commonly. What will be the effect of these dire prophecies, given in all good faith and good intent? If it be true that there is no such thing as a "psychological negative," then no matter whether the warning has been couched in positive terms or in negative, the parent has succeeded only in strongly *emphasizing* the thought of stepping into the street. When the time arrives at which this course appeals to the child as attractive, the chances are all in favor of his adopting it. And the probabilities are very strong that the parent's emphasizing it, is going to make this time come much sooner than it would have done otherwise.

"But what should you do in such a case?" you may perhaps exclaim in desperation. "Should a child be permitted to expose himself to injury, and possibly to death itself, in this quixotic striving after liberty?" By no means. First of all, it would be well to warn every parent that he

cannot escape the blame, nor avoid the consequences of his remissness, if he leaves a child unguarded or unrestrained in a situation as dangerous as the one just assumed,—a danger very real and very grave, in the perilous traffic conditions of the twentieth century city street or country road. He can not fondly hug the delusion that such perfervid warnings as we have been considering, can ever be relied upon to protect his child against such a danger. Only after placing the child in such a situation that the dangerous action will be as nearly impossible of accomplishment as he can render it, will he be justified in trying to make him still safer by his counsel. He may then do his best to endow the course that he wishes taken, with some sort of emotional desirability or attractiveness. This might be done in one of many different ways, varying according to the age and sex of the child. For instance, to girls of a certain age, the idea that a lady like mother stays on the sidewalk, may be sufficient to bring about the desired result. For a boy, at a different age, the strongest appeal may be that he is to keep his smaller playmates from danger by staying on the side-

walk, and so do a manly, scoutlike act of helpfulness to those weaker and younger and less competent than himself, by setting them a good example. Whatever the choice, the point to be conveyed is that we avoid on the one hand all emphasizing of the idea that we want to guard against, that of going into the street; while on the other hand we actively inculcate the opposite course, that we want followed (the safe and desired one of staying on the sidewalk), making it compelling by investing it with a pleasurable emotional tone. In other words, we thus strengthen it by enlisting the unconscious, which works, not from a sense of duty, but from the much stronger incentive, desire. This is, as we have agreed, the strongest dynamic obtainable. And if we remember the rule, that the younger the individual, the stronger his unconscious and the weaker, relatively, his conscious, reasoning self, we shall put even stronger emphasis upon the importance of enlisting the unconscious in securing obedience from our children.

Our hypothetical parent mentioned above was quite right in warning his child, explaining to him in the way best adapted to carrying convic-

tion to the little fellow's mind, the dangers inherent in what he wanted to do. He was quite wrong, however, in expecting that one explanation, or even a series of explanations, would have sufficient restraining power to overcome the elemental urge (well-nigh irresistible at a certain age) of following a flying ball, no matter whither its flight leads. He was still more perilously wrong in neglecting to take such steps as would render yielding to temptation impossible, on the part of his sorely tempted son. And his last mistake was the most grievous of all. For he himself gave way to the very human, but not for that reason justifiable, weakness of relieving his sensations of terror and exasperation at the narrow escape of his child, by assaulting a little fellow whose comparative physical inferiority made it impossible for him to strike back. The parent thus got relief for his outraged feelings,—but at the costly price of setting an example of lack of control that, without in any way helping the situation, lowered him by just so much in the respect and esteem of his son.

No, until the average adult can be trusted to stop, look, and listen whenever he approaches a

grade crossing in his motor,—a time apparently considerably in the future, in this year of grace, with its thousands of fatalities and its tens of thousands of casualties,—we may as well realize that warning children of dangers is not going to prevent them from running risks. For they, as children, cannot fairly be expected to obey our rules and regulations, when we, as adults, refuse to be bound by the equally sane restraints set for our guidance by city and state authorities, who legislate for us as we do for our children. "Like parent, like child," is a wise old saw that may well give us pause, ere we judge these little offenders too harshly and unsympathetically.

CHAPTER V

THE MOST POTENT INFLUENCE IN CHILD CULTURE—IMITATION

It is quite possible, we are told, to be so close up to the woods that one cannot distinguish the trees. And so it has happened that many of us parents have been so closely in contact with the problems of our children's upbringing, that we have failed to appreciate the potentialities for good lying in some of the characteristics that have been right under our noses. One of these is the proneness of children to imitate,—frequently to imitate a bad model while they overlook a good one, perhaps, but nevertheless to be imitating something, all the time.

But, says an exasperated father, why should my son single out for imitation this or that annoying, irritating little habit or trick of mine that I am always trying to overcome, and that becomes

so much more noticeable when I am cross or irritable or excited, rather than some one of the few good traits that I feel sure I must possess? Probably he doesn't imitate this exclusively; though its disagreeableness makes it seem especially prominent. He is constantly imitating all sorts of things; though the fact that the father admits that the annoying habit of his becomes more strongly evident in times of stress, gives a clue to its reason for so strongly impressing itself upon his son. If ever there is a time of stress, it is when father and son are in violent collision over problems of discipline; and if the annoying trait becomes worse at such a time, emotion, the motivator of the unconscious, is in an especially favorable situation for driving home the vivid example. But it is quite probable that the imitation of our good traits by our children is just as strong and as general, though not so strongly forced upon our attention, as that of our less desirable ones. Certainly it is quite common to recognize traits of kindness and habits of courtesy in a child, the originals of which we can readily trace in the conduct of his parents.

The overwhelming importance of the home, and

of the character of each one of its members, is due to the enormous power of this characteristic of imitation in character formation. Emerson never spoke more truly nor with more insight than when he said: "What you *are* speaks so loudly that I cannot hear a word that you *say*." It is possible, perhaps, that conduct may be influenced and character formed by advice, exhortation, verbal correction, preachments. Certainly one would think so, to listen to the flood of talk that pours unceasingly upon the child from birth and early childhood throughout youth and adolescence to manhood, and after. Most of us elders would consider ourselves deprived of our most effective educational weapons, if we were denied the privilege of constantly exhorting our children, with a sort of verbal bombardment. There seems, however, little doubt that the major part of the effect produced is *in spite of*, rather than *because of*, these words of ours which we consider so necessary and effective. It is the constant *imitation of ourselves*, who as their parents are the ones in closest and most constant touch with them, that is responsible for the results that we have been attributing to our sage counsels.

A case in point illustrates this. A little fellow who possessed many traits quite the reverse of endearing, had one most attractive habit which constantly called forth favorable comment at the expense of the other children among whom he was visiting. He was the only one of the group who invariably added "sir" to his "yes" and "no"; and who used this courteous little word instead of the abrupt "what?" of the others. Now as several of the parents there had done their individual bests to inculcate a similar habit in their respective charges, without startling success, there was much speculation as to how the result had been obtained in this youngster, who evinced no indication of a willingness to take on any other elements of "polish." The enigma ceased to be an enigma, however, when the child's father arrived on the scene. Although himself still a young man, he was sufficiently tinged with the formality of the former generation in the South, always to employ the courteous little word, not only in his speech with his elders, but as well with his peers. Either consciously or unconsciously, he had adopted the habit of treating his son as he would any other gentleman; and the child had

responded to this influence by unconsciously imitating his father's never-failing "sir."

We have been crediting (or in some cases debiting!) heredity with the occurrence of many traits that have undoubtedly been derived from early environment solely. We need not here go into that involved and apparently endless debate over the relative importance of heredity and environment, in order to get the point of the importance of imitation in bringing out parental characteristics in children. There are of course many phyical traits that a child can get in no other way than by inheritance from the family stocks represented by his father and mother. There are on the other hand very many parental characteristics of a sort that we know cannot be transmitted through the blood stream, that yet reappear with startling similarity in the child. The fact that the parent may have died before we believed the child old enough to notice and hence to imitate such traits, is not a cogent reason for dismissing imitation as an explanation of their occurrence. We now know that the first five or six years are by far the most important in the life of the child, as far as the reception of impressions

is concerned; and that of these early formative years, the first is by all odds the most receptive, and the most sensitive to the impressions received. We now know that he can and does unconsciously register parental tricks and habits and mannerisms at an age at which it seems impossible that he should be taking conscious note of his surroundings. Thus many a so-called inherited trait is not the result of heredity at all, but instead is the registering and the reproduction of some trait observed in the parent and recorded with photographic fullness of detail by the sensorium that is taking in and registering everything that goes on around the little life, at an age so young that no one would have believed the child capable of observation at all. Conscious observation and imitation there is not, of course, in the sense in which we ordinarily understand these terms; but there is that far more potent involuntary registering in the unconscious, to appear in later months, or even in years far removed, when the proper moment for such an appearance has come. If then imitation plays such a paramount part in life, how important it is that the models furnished should be of the very finest type! And these models

must of course, in the very nature of things, be set by those of the family circle in which the developing life finds itself.

Closely bound up with this matter of imitation, is another (perhaps we ought to say a phase of the same subject), commonly spoken of as *identification.* The child who imitates his father or mother so closely as actually to think himself into the mind and thoughts of that parent, and to all intents and purposes live over parts of the parent's life and thoughts as he conceives them to have been led, has succeeded in "identifying" himself with that parent, insofar at least as concerns the thoughts in which he succeeds in accomplishing this perfect imitation. Now whether or not we consider such a state of affairs desirable, will vary to a great extent, according to what sort of model is chosen, how complete a degree of identification is achieved, what results grow out of it, etc. As a matter of fact, however, that which concerns us most of all is the fact that such identification does occur, and occurs very widely, whether we like it and approve of it or not. As it does occur so widely, we have to take cognizance of it, and so deal with it as to make it serve us in directing the

destinies of the child, healthily and helpfully, rather than let it dominate the situation to his hurt.

Probably the earliest, and in many ways the most powerful, identification in a child's life, is that which occurs with the earliest accessible model, the mother. As this is one of the earliest, so it is probably as well one of the most lasting and fateful, identifications to take place. A lesson of first importance here is of course to be learned by the mother of every child, who will thus have an additional reason for eliminating from her own life as many undesirable traits as possible. For she may rest assured that in this way she is doing the greatest service to her child, inasmuch as such undesirable traits are thus being removed from his field of observation, and of consequent imitation. The identification with the parent of the opposite sex has an especially influential bearing upon the child in his later (early adult) life, when the time comes for him to choose his mate. Its most striking influence in this connection is to make him extremely sensitive to qualities in the potential mate which remind him (in the unconscious, if not con-

sciously) of that parent. Many otherwise utterly inexplicable marriages are perfectly easily understood, in the light of this explanation.

But there is another bearing that these early identifications have. This lies in the effect that they will have after marriage upon the future man or woman's attitude toward his wife, or her husband. We all know the man who has to be "mothered" by his wife, in situations where we are inclined to think that a more mature, manly attitude is called for. We are equally familiar with the "child-wife" type (Dora in Dickens's *David Copperfield* is perhaps the extreme example), who is constitutionally unable to contribute to the marital partnership the mature coöperation that a husband has every right to expect from his wife; but instead of giving this, hangs upon him with the parasitic dependence of an immature daughter. Such a parody of the fine, mutually helpful relationship that true marriage is, constitutes the tragedy of many a shipwrecked romance. If parents can avoid it for their children by means of a foreknowledge of its possibility, and a consequent alertness for means of preventing it, they certainly owe it to themselves and

their children alike to pilot them safely by this real peril.

Another instance of this many-sided identification, that holds much that is both suggestive and valuable to parents, is that of the boy with his group or "gang." This word, once used as slang or argot, has found a place in the technical language of sociology and psychology, because of the importance and potency of all that it stands for. The gang spirit, in which the individual member feels himself a component part of the organization, using its secret signs and passwords, and holding each fellow member in particular regard *as* a member, irrespective of any personal or individual relationship that he may have toward him, is one that parents had far better make use of, than fight against. And one attitude or the other they will have to assume, be assured of that! This gang spirit is seen at its best in the team spirit in sport, the loyalty of the boy to his school and class, and particularly in the fine spirit and comradeship of the Boy Scout movement. This latter has proven such a powerful element for good in the life of the boy, that it has been extensively copied by other organizations, and

intensively developed within its own ranks. The Woodcraft League of America, the junior department of the Young Men's Christian Association, the old Boys' Brigade and similar military and semi-military organizations, all are founded upon this idea of identification of the boy with his group: sharing in its labors, its insignia, and its ritual; participating in its triumphs; and being welded still more closely with the group and its component individual members by tasting in common with them the bitterness of defeat. For too long a time the "gang," with all of its loaferdom and its rowdyism, was allowed a monopoly of the fine traits inherent in this identification of the boy with his group; and it has been little short of marvellous to see the way in which the good features of the old gang have been retained, while getting rid of its evils, by these various movements, of which the Boy Scout organization is perhaps the best and most widely known. We can do no more at this time than to refer to this particular phase of identification, and point out how parents may utilize it for the benefit of their boys and girls. For the various sister organizations, such as Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts, Girl

Guides, etc., have made it possible for the same spirit that has been made use of so widely for the good of the boys, to be applied with equal effect in the case of their sisters. A fuller discussion of this whole subject,—such an important one in the life of the adolescent,—will be found in the companion volume to this, *Teaching and the Newer Psychology.*

One of the most important models of the boy or girl in these groups is of course the leader. It would be hard to think of an individual in the life of today who occupies a position of more importance as a pattern for the boys and girls of our communities, than these leaders, whether they are called scout masters, pioneers, chiefs, or whatever else the ritual calls for. If they are definitely included in the scheme of things educational, as they well may be by thoughtful parents, they can accomplish incalculable good for their young followers, just at a stage when the influence of parents and teachers alike is temporarily at rather a low ebb. It is surprising, when one realizes just what an aid this can be, how seldom parents do consciously and deliberately make use of this wonderfully potent force in the lives of their boys and

girls. It is far commoner for them to look upon the club or the troop simply as a stop-gap and time filler, affording themselves a little welcome relief from the irksome job of tending their children; and the scout master will testify that the only acquaintance he has with the parents of his boys is as a rule that of his own seeking.

Enough has been said of imitation, and its special phase identification, to awaken us to their importance in the scheme of things educational, developmental, and disciplinary. It would not be easy to think of a force more potent in the developing life of the young, than this same unconscious imitation of a leader, whether parent, teacher, older chum, club leader, scout master, pastor, priest, or character from fiction, history, stage, or "movie" screen. It is well worth any parent's time and effort to see to it that, insofar as he can accomplish it, the models upon which his child is to pattern his life, shall be of the highest, finest, and most admirable type obtainable.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOST POWERFUL INSTITUTION IN THE WORLD—HOME AND FAMILY

We read and hear much, in these days of applied science, on the subjects of better feeding, better clothing, better ventilation, and the periodic physical examination, especially as these concern the child. We hear of movements to improve the school, and its courses of study, and the preparation of the teacher. Now none of these subjects can possibly be too much stressed. There is, however, one fundamental need, which goes deeper than all these other needs. It is one whose fulfillment waits, not like these others, upon the action of the community as a whole, but upon the initiative of the individual parent. And this need, modern psychology teaches us, is the improvement of the individual home. And by "improvement," no vague, hazy, indefinite sort of "uplift" is meant. On the contrary, the

improvement meant is just as specific as that prescribed by the efficiency engineer, called in to diagnose the case of a failing business, when he declares that there must be an improvement in administrative methods if the enterprise is to survive. Some of the lines that this should follow, and the whys and wherefores thereof, will be the theme of this chapter.

First of all, let us see why this particular phase of child study (the home and family) should be deemed of such compelling importance as to be accorded first place in a discussion of child welfare. Why not let the emphasis rest, as it always has done in the past, upon the school, where we pay our taxes to have trained educators influence our children along the most approved pedagogic lines? Chiefly because leaving this job to the schools has in it the same sort of error that lies in the classical piece of foolishness known as locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen. But, you may say, I send my child to school when he is six years old; not much delay about that, is there? I couldn't begin the job of educating my child much earlier than that, could I? Perhaps there is not much delay in that, as years go. It is possible even

to state exactly how much delay there has been, in terms of actual time wasted. From the point of view of the best modern psychological thought, it is possible to state definitely that you have wasted just six years, out of a possible six years, of your child's time for education, by waiting so long! Furthermore, the wisest psychologists insist that the six years thus wasted are far and away the most important in the whole life of the individual. In these years are formed the main "character trends." These will have "set" or solidified in their permanent molds, by the end of this time; and nothing that we can do, later in life, will ever undo the harm that neglect and faulty environment and harmful influences have wrought during the first plastic years. Nonsense, you say? Perhaps; and yet, whereas there are many points on which these trained minds disagree, it would be almost impossible to find one scientist of them all who would take issue with this statement of the importance of the influences brought to bear upon the child during these earliest, "pre-school" years. If there were not one other reason to be advanced for the need of the improvement of the home, this would be sufficient. There are, however, many more.

Suppose we were to be so situated that we could, —and were so "school-minded" by temperament and conviction that we would,—send our children to school at an earlier age than six, as is beginning to be urged by the more advanced pedagogical thinkers. Whether or not this would be desirable, we need not discuss here. But even if we were to send a child to school earlier than this, we certainly should not expect the school to exert its influence for more than five hours a day at the most. Many educators and physicians are now insisting, as a matter of fact, that until a child is at least ten years of age, he should not have more than three hours of school a day. What should we do with him for the remaining hours of the day? He cannot sleep more than eleven of these, or at the most twelve. There would still be left more hours than are allotted to the school, during which the home must influence the child, whether for weal or for woe. An active child is not going to remain dormant for all these hours. What shall the home influence be? Shall it be haphazard; or shall it be carefully planned?

No matter how desirable the best of outside

influences may be, the home will still, in the last analysis, exert by far the strongest leverage on the child. And if we will but consider the obvious facts in connection with these earliest years which the psychologists stress so, we shall see other reasons for their importance. During these years, the people who come in contact with the child in any prolonged way, or to any intensive degree, are very few in number. This of course greatly intensifies the influence that each of these few exerts. There is first (yes, and last, and all the time!) the mother. During the earliest months of life, hers is virtually the sole outside personality with which the child comes into any contact at all. How then can her influence during these first few months fail to be all-important? At this early period, the tiny babe receives the first big impressions that come crowding upon him with his entrance into the outside world. The mother's influence then is paramount at this time. Next will come the nurse,—or, in the typical American family today, thank God, the father,—who will exert some slight influence on the little life. This *is* slight, of course, as compared with the almost constant touch maintained by the mother; but

great, as compared with that of any other members of the family. Those who come later,—grandparents, uncles, aunts, and family friends,—all these will be the teachers of the little life, whether wittingly so or not, long before the school ever gets near him with its more studied, formal educational scheme. And it is thus the part of simple common sense to realize that education begun at even such a tender age as six, is hopelessly delayed,—or rather, that education could not, if we wished it, be deferred until any such age as this; but that it begins, whether we like it or not, at birth. Hence it behooves us to decide what the nature of this earliest education is to be; to determine, in other words, just what the home is to be.

Perhaps an even more compelling reason for the importance of the character of the home life as the overwhelmingly important force in the shaping of the little life, is one that we have considered in some detail in a previous chapter. We need only allude to it here, in pointing out its bearing upon the family situation. It is that the most important factor in the life of man, the red strand running through the whole fabric, the vivifying, enriching vital force (what the French call the

"élan vital") is the emotional or affectional force. To repeat what has been stated elsewhere at greater length and in much more detail: we have been accustomed to speak of various forms of love as if each were an entirely distinct emotion,—parental and filial love, conjugal love, romantic love, platonic love, love of comrade or friend. The best modern psychological thought takes a position here that is most unfamiliar and strange to us at first sight; and yet it is wonderfully suggestive and enriching to our thinking, if we will but apply it as we should apply any other scientific hypothesis. This is that all sorts of love are but developmental stages of one great emotional stream that begins at birth and proceeds in a progressive, cumulative way, stage by stage, until we cease to exist. If this be true,—and the more deeply one considers the thought and its applications, the stronger seem the arguments in its favor and the weaker and fewer the objections to it,—it will readily be realized that the direction given this stream at its source by the one individual who has the first and most constant opportunity of influencing it (namely, the mother), must be overwhelming in its effect for good or evil,

as compared with any influence, no matter how powerful, that is subsequently brought to bear upon it. We have always appreciated the importance of mother love. We are only now coming to sense the scientific basis of its importance, and the reason for its tremendous leverage upon the life of the individual.

Still another reason for the importance of the home and the character of each of its members, lies in the enormous power of imitation in character formation. This has been considered at length in Chapter V; and so need only be mentioned here. Its force is incalculable.

We shall realize still further the effect upon the individual of the home and of the family, if we dwell upon the fact that these future men and women are to gain their conceptions of religion,—yes, of God Himself,—from the models supplied them by ourselves in the home.

At first glance, it may seem to the parent almost ludicrous to claim that he, with all of his human frailties and weaknesses, is to be regarded as occupying with respect to his child the position of a god; who, having procreated his body, must keep up for the next six years the continuous creation of

his mind and soul, himself serving the while as the model for the child's actual worship! It will become appalling, rather than ludicrous, however, when we realize, as we must, that the child's conception of the fatherhood and the maternal love of God, must like every other conception, be formed from available models; and that the father and the mother, by virtue of their constant occupation of the position of models to whom the little child looks up by the very nature of the home situation, cannot escape the duty of thus forming the child's religious conceptions by the nature of the picture that their own lives present to him. Such is the power for good or evil inherent in the very manners, actions, voice, glance of the eye, and habits of hand and tongue, of the parents of the little child. In fine, there is absolutely no circumstance, from birth to six years of age and later, which can take place within the purview of the child, which may not have the effect of turning him in the direction desired or dreaded by his parents.

What then shall the home be? What can we do to make it the influence it should be, upon the lives of our children, now that we realize that it is the most important factor in their education?

To most people, the ideal conception of home is that of a place where all the component human parts are comfortable, healthy, and therefore happy. But the "therefore happy" does not, unfortunately, follow as a matter of course. Witness the average American home circle at the end of a rainy afternoon! Comfort and physical health, when secured, are but the foundation stones of an acceptable home. Important they are, yes, indispensable, as is any foundation; but by no stretch of the imagination are they to be considered as constituting the edifice itself. Granting these, there must follow next a realization that the child is constantly being influenced by every person with whom he comes in contact,—and by that person's every action. We must be willing so to live, and so to conduct ourselves, that the pattern set shall be one of which we can approve, when it is reproduced for us by our children later on in their lives. There can be no conception of the home as the place in which to "let down and be natural," if "being natural" means being hasty and unguarded in speech, slovenly and careless in dress, and slouchy and relaxed in posture. Why should we give of our best, in speech and dress and posture,

to the outside world for which we care so very much less than we do for our dear ones, if we are not to give *them* of our best, too? Nor can hasty speech, short temper, and harsh commands find a place at the table or in the living room,—unless we are willing to see them reproduced, as they most surely will be, in the daily lives of our little ones. Disorder can be tolerated only if we are willing to have it reappear in the lives and ways of thinking of our boys and girls. Our best must be employed unsparingly, daily and hourly, for home consumption. It is not something to be reserved, to be brought out only with the company china and silver and linen, and put away as promptly after the company goes! Like watchful soldiers on campaign, we must be on duty all the time; not, like peacetime militia, only at drill-times and when on parade.

As a means to securing such a home atmosphere, however, it will be necessary for us to sit down and take stock seriously of the situation. We must count the cost, and see whether it is going to be greater than will be justified by the resulting gains. For it will take real effort, make sure of that; and sustained effort, too. It may at first

give a sensation of distinct strain and striving, to give out always only of our best. But it is interesting and valuable to observe and remember that the reverse,—giving way to the hasty impulse, the slouchy habit, the lazy tendency,—does not give us the real, lasting relief that we are prone to think it does. The hasty word merits, and usually evokes, an equally hasty and unkind response; which is anything but restful and soothing, to judge it only by its immediate effects, without any consideration of its ultimate end-products. The effort required for putting out our best side is one that is quieting, restful, and sustaining, even at the time. And it is productive of an atmosphere that is far more restful than that inevitably produced in the home where the thoughtless impulse is given way to. True, before we can hope even to approximate to this sort of home life, we shall have to study ourselves carefully, and find out what are our own weaknesses, our "soft spots" and "blind spots," our own trends and tendencies. Each one has his "complexes," to use that much overworked and sadly misused scientific term. And a "complex," like any other sore spot, or tense throbbing sprain (to use but

two of the many physical parallels of this emotional disorder), hurts when it is unthinkingly or intentionally irritated by a rough touch. We like to nurse our complexes. "Personal idiosyncrasies," "pet weaknesses," "peculiarities of mine," "perfectly justifiable prejudices," are some of the names with which we try to disguise them; and we are very loath to sacrifice them. But it is a simple mental computation to make,—the comparison between satisfaction gained and satisfaction lost; with the "unearned increment" of future benefit to the child for whom we are making the apparent sacrifice. And the return, even from the solely selfish standpoint, given the parent by the child reared in such a home, is not to be compared with that rendered by the child from the other environment.

What concrete suggestions may be offered here, for the creation of such a home as we have been considering? It is to be a home which will serve as a distinct educational factor,—rather, as a host of factors,—tending in the direction in which we want all educational factors to tend. It is to lay the foundations for the later educational influences that will be in order when school age comes on.

Primarily, there must be some sort of definite schedule, or regimen, to which the children shall become accustomed, as to the running of some well-oiled machine. The exception to the rule is so easy to make,—and so hard to stop making! And yet children are surprisingly ready to conform to rules, when once they get into their swing. Not rules arbitrarily established, and enforced with much verbal accompaniment; but rules that grow naturally, and that commend themselves to the children's sense of the fitness of things, as soon as they are old enough to apply reason to these rules.

Meals, particularly, can be made to follow a very definite formula, and one from which the child will not readily deviate, nor allow others to deviate with impunity. The washing of faces and hands before meals; the waiting until all are assembled before sitting down; the placing of a chair for mother, a privilege to be exercised in strict rotation; grace to be said, likewise a matter of "turn"; all these can be made parts of a fascinating game, if they are approached carefully and thoughtfully, and with the realization of the importance inhering in such a formal regimen. In

place of the usual bickering that marks mealtimes in so many families, the provision of a definite topic or topics of conversation has proved a revolutionizing force, in some homes. One family of quite young children has a rule that every one must bring a story or short poem to the table, and present it as his contribution. Another makes it a custom for each member to relate something he has seen during the day, and tell it in as finished a style as he can. Anything that will supersede the tiresome, negative "don't" with something constructive, is what is needed here. A little thought will furnish material indefinitely, if the earnest desire for something better is really present.

If definite form, and a positive constructive program with the elimination of the "don'ts," is essential at the table, where at the worst there is always one activity provided,—that of eating!—how much more essential is it that there be order and some definite program for the playroom, and for the hours devoted to recreation!

Probably very few grown-ups have ever stopped to realize how very little there is in the average home that is made for children, accessible to chil-

dren, and suitable for children. Very few houses today have any room in which children can play, unhampered by the fear of doing harm to something that their elders consider precious, if they indulge in any of the freer movements that exercise their larger muscles, and that are so necessary to their healthy development. Further than this, it is most unusual to find provision made for work, in the form of work table, drawers, or shelves, in which may be kept the children's implements and utensils, materials and uncompleted work, and to which they may go freely when they want to do a definite piece of work, without asking the "by your leave" of any adult. We cannot hope to teach a child order and self-reliance, if he cannot engage in even the simplest of these activities that interest him, without calling for adult help to enable him to start, and to help him clean up after he is finished. *Liberty* to do implies not only *permission* to do, but as well *implements with which* to do. Accessibility of such implements will do wonders in the way of replacing dependence and timidity by manliness and self-reliance. Every child should have a bookcase, in which to keep his very own books.

He should have a work table, or big desk, where he may hammer away at his problems, whether they be the relatively simple ones (to us) of cutting and pasting, and "playing" with beads or blocks; or the more complicated tasks of carpentry, drawing, and coloring. He should have a set of broad shelves, where he may display his tools, his implements, his materials, and his finished or incomplete products. And he should have at least one drawer, preferably several, in which certain treasures may be kept more suitably than out on the shelves. A parent who cannot or will not, by some shift of the family arrangements, produce so much of an equipment as this for his child, might just as well admit that his conception of the importance of the job of parenthood falls hopelessly below the minimum acceptable standards.

Right here some one may exclaim indignantly: "But that is ridiculous. I haven't even a separate room for my child to sleep in, much less a separate playroom! Modern conditions in a great city today render such demands as these absolutely impractical." Such a charge of underestimating the difficulties inherent in the job of parenthood

seems hardly likely to be sustained against one who has lived for several decades in the largest city in this country,—one of those decades as the father of small children. But years of experience as a practising physician, with access into homes of all sorts and of all classes, have rarely brought to light a home in which some such minimum equipment for the job of bringing up children could not have been provided, had its importance, not to say its indispensability, been appreciated. Further than this, one home comes to mind, in every way as respectable as most, in which the importance of such accommodation for the children was so keenly felt, that an otherwise self-respecting father and mother turned their "parlor" or living-room into a work-and-play-room for their youngsters. How did they entertain guests? They had to weigh the work requirements of their children for several hours each day, against the hospitality requirements of their friends and acquaintances once a week. And they realized,—quite selfishly, perhaps,—that fulfilling these requirements of their children's would result in bringing them in dividends of the greatest value, at a time when the friends for whose entertain-

ment they might have sacrificed the rights of their children, could not possibly render them any commensurate return. Furthermore, the friends whose approval they prized most highly, knew without being told that they considered as the most important duty in their lives, the bringing up into manly men and womanly women of the little lives that God had entrusted to them as sole custodians. Such friends thought none the less of them, when they were entertained in a room whose chief decorations were not the mahogany tip-table, the grandfather clock, and the Windsor chairs that had once been their chief treasures. The well-ordered and workmanlike carpenter benches, the broad shelves stacked with work products well begun or handily done, and the bookshelves filled with familiar volumes, which spoke of playtime and worktime well spent by craftsmen in the making, made an excellent setting for the reception of real friends.

But how about those who live in boarding houses? I have heard of such folk,—have even been one of them, due to the exigencies of the Great War, which cast many of us where we would not, —I had almost said where we wist not! But I

remember that every room in which I have ever lived, had at the least four corners; and one of these, fitted up with a soap-box table and a soap-box book-case, enriched by a few shelves and equipped with tiny utensils for washing faces and hands, and with hooks for hanging doll's clothes, is one of the pleasant memories of a time that had much in it that one would gladly not remember.

The Spanish jokesmith makes his philanthropically disposed old gentleman say, as he refuses to give anything to a beggar because he has nothing smaller than a twenty peso bill, for which the beggar cannot make change: "It is necessary to have capital, even to be a beggar!" And likewise it is necessary to have brains, and ingenuity, and above all a desire to create an environment that will give some scope to one's child's budding energies and desires, even though one follows such an unskilled occupation as that of parenthood!

CHAPTER VII

THE MOST INDECISIVE CONTEST EVER WAGED—PHANTASY VERSUS REALITY

ALL through this daily life of ours, affecting its every manifestation, we can detect two counter-currents—better to say, perhaps, there exist two phases,—mutually exclusive, constantly at war with each other, and yet neither one able completely to vanquish the other. A temporary advantage, a momentary ousting of the one by the other, is as near to a decision as either ever scores. In order to bring these vividly to our minds before we attempt to study them at close range,—and they will well repay our closest study, in the hints they give us on how to help our children meet their problems,—let us run over a succession or list of opposites, in order to see whether the mere enumeration of such a group of

contrasts will not give us an inkling of what these two antagonistic phases are. Later, we shall go into them in more detail. Here is the list:

Fact,—fancy; history,—romance; photography,—painting; prose,—poetry; engineer,—artist; constructive planning,—day-dreaming, brown study, or firelight dreaming and castle-building; reality,—phantasy; logic,—imagination; literal truth,—figurative flights; the night before,—and the cold gray dawn of the morning after.

If these words and phrases have registered at all, they have summed up before the reader's mental vision two definite moods, or trends, in life; the one, of stark, sheer reality; the other of pleasing, accommodating latitudinarianism, if you will. Fact is cold, hard, unyielding; whereas fancy is warm, sensuous, captivating, easily painting things as we would like to have them, untrammelled by the way they happen to be in real life. History is obliged to stick to the facts; but romance can at will take facts, or leave them alone, or taking them can embroider them to suit its own sweet will. Photography must record things as the all-revealing sunlight shows them to be; painting, or art, can accentuate the things that will best bring out

the artist's mood or thought, while it subordinates or neglects entirely the things that he does not wish to have exist at all. Prose is more or less subject to the laws of things as they are; poetry is untrammelled by such annoying little details as the distinction between "is" and "might be." The engineer who would build a bridge or the architect who would construct a cathedral, must estimate stresses and strains, and must hold himself down to a consideration of financial expenditure and time limitations. Whereas the artist has but to mix his pigments and let his fancy rove, and there arise mighty piers and spidery cables, lofty naves and lovely painted windows, quite irrespective of the laws of physics and the exigencies of time, space, or coin of the realm. Constructive planning may not stray from its task, if it is to accomplish its desired result; but there exists no such annoying compulsion about day-dreaming. Nay, it is far easier and much pleasanter, to gaze into the fire and speculate about nothing or everything until the embers die away from glowing red into ashy gray,—unless an unfeeling relative interferes to bring one back to earth with an unpleasant thud! We plan

all sorts of fine, high sounding, brilliant coups in the freedom and spaciousness of the brave night before; but in the cold gray dawn, with actuality knocking unfeelingly at the door, and demanding that we produce results, our broad sweeping gestures become feeble, pinched little motions; and our "enterprises of great pith and moment . . . lose the name of action."

It may fairly be said that all mental or emotional life is the resultant, (the algebraic sum, if you will,) of the action of these two opposing forces,—swaying now one way and now the other, according to which one happens to gain a temporary advantage. For the sake of convenience, we may adopt some such rough classification as William James's "tough-minded" and "tender-minded," or Jung's "extrovert" and "introvert." The perfect actualist (who of course could not exist, in the very nature of things, any more than could the perfect romanticist), the tough-minded extrovert, would be an insufferable creature, if we can suppose just for a moment that he *could* exist at all,—no sympathy, no vision, no imagination, no religion; just a "hardboiled," "practical" man, no better than a machine. The perfect

romanticist, on the other hand, could not exist either. For as we have seen, he would not so much as eat or drink in the flesh at all, much preferring the delights of an imagined Epicurean repast far exceeding the pleasures of any mortal feast, until he shrivelled up and died of starvation in the face of plenty. Such an extreme, while impossible in the normal, is by no means a rare picture in the realms of the pathological; for in our insane asylums we not infrequently see the passage from marked introversion over into extreme melancholia, in which the patient reaches a point where, unless forcibly fed, he will actually starve himself to death. So that what would otherwise be simply an imagined case, for the sake of logical completeness, does really occur as a concrete example of what we might consider only a suppositious extreme.

Without going into greater detail here, for this subject has been so excellently handled in a dozen of the popular books of the day that it is fairly familiar to the general reader, it is well to notice two outstanding points of difference between these two great forces,—the actual or real, and the imaginary or pleasure principle. The

first is that, no matter how desirable and even necessary an admixture of the *imaginary* may be, the *actual* is the more immediately necessary and valuable, as a moment's thought will show. For if instead of nourishing the body by eating real bread, one were to content himself by imagining rare feasts, he would incontinently starve to death, as we have seen, and there would be no individual left either to do or to dream! Also, the actual is by far the harder of the two to arrive at; for any one can sit and dream indefinitely without any effort whatsoever, whereas it takes a certain very definite amount of "git up and git" to accomplish anything, no matter how inconsiderable it may be. Now if as we have seen these two principles are existent and active, a constant conflict for supremacy is being waged in every individual in the world; and hence, in the child whose good is our sole concern in this discussion. Inasmuch as it becomes increasingly necessary for the individual, with advancing age, to "do . . . deeds, not (simply) dream them all day long," it is plainly the function of education, to lead him forth from the realms of indefinite pleasure-dreaming, into and along the paths of actual accom-

plishment. This is, after all, about as high and fine a task as education can set for itself. As it has been shown that all the odds are in favor of the pleasure principle and against cold fact, it will readily be seen that education, on this basis, has a man-sized job cut out for itself, if it is to accomplish this task.

But what has all this theory to do with the practical task we have been holding ourselves to throughout our communings together,—namely, that of helping actual parents with their very concrete job of bringing up their real children? First of all, it gives us an entirely new clue to the flickering flame that we call "interest,"—that much-to-be-desired, indispensable something without which the acquisition of knowledge is impossible, but about which our educators seem to know so little. If the actual or real is so necessary for the mastery of every single concrete educational task; and if on the other hand the phantasy, or pleasure principle, is the one that has all the odds in its favor; then the whole task of the teacher is to keep the real in the ascendant over the phantasy for the longest possible time,—though he must realize that it is of the very essence

of human nature that he shall never be entirely successful. And in judging any scheme or system of education or of discipline, we shall be in a much better position to fairly evaluate its claims, if we realize that its chances of success or failure are in direct proportion to its chances of evoking and fixing the *interest* of the child,—which is of course but another way of saying, giving the mastery to the *real* at the expense of the easier and far more attractive and pleasant *imaginary*.

One of the most potent aids that education can enlist in this task, is what the analytical psychologist calls "ego supremacy" or "ego satisfaction"; what we ordinary folk call "a proper pride"; or what, when we were very young, we preferred to designate as "showing off!" There are of course many different ways of satisfying one's ego, differing with the type of ego involved. While one ego delights in showing its ability to triumph over all resistance, another gets its satisfaction in exhibiting its very meekness or lack of the triumphing character. But satisfied it will be, rest assured of that, just as truly and as surely as water will always seek its own level. And any scheme of discipline or education that does not recognize this,

and take care of the ego satisfaction needs of its every pupil, is foredoomed to failure.

Now the child who successfully masters his task, gets his satisfaction from this very mastery,—plus the very real and satisfying envy of the other youngsters, the approval of his teacher, and the praise of his parents. These taken all together form a pretty fair sum total of the opinion of his whole world. Say what we will of the satisfaction of duty well done,—and it is of course a very sustaining consciousness,—there is nevertheless a far greater satisfaction and a much more sustaining consciousness for most of us, in the knowledge that we have done something to call forth the praise, or the approval, or the envy, of our fellowmen. Successful modes of education are those that take this characteristic of "poor human nature" very definitely into their reckoning, and make it work for, rather than against, their purposes.

Suppose though that education makes the task of learning unbearably difficult,—that it becomes quite impossible for the child to excel, and so satisfy his ego acceptably, at any of the tasks set for him; what then? Water will not flow up hill, nor will ego satisfaction be denied; though water

may *appear* to do this contra-physical thing, and the ego also may *seem* to go unappeased. There are two courses open to the child who cannot satisfy his desire to shine by excelling at his educational task. If he is "extroverted" or "tough-minded," as we say, he will get the *hostile* attention of the teacher (inasmuch as he cannot gain her *favorable* regard) and the envy and awed admiration of his fellows (quite as satisfying as the milder emotions that would have been evoked by his academic prowess) by creating a disturbance in various antisocial ways. Wrong-headed and devoid of proper pleasure as this may seem to his teacher and to the rest of us obtuse adults (remote as we are from the mind-processes of the child, and forgetful of our own childhood emotions and experiences), there is no room for doubt that this is a very soul-satisfying method of expressing the dominant ego in childhood. The moment that the parent and the teacher get a glimpse of the truth of this fact, they have obtained a clue to the successful handling of this most difficult and highly annoying phase in the life of the child or adolescent with whom they have to deal.

But what if the child who cannot excel at the

educational task set him, be of the "introverted" or "tender-minded" type? For him the route to ego-maximation so easily open to his more "hard-boiled" classmate, is closed by reason of his very tendermindedness. There is, however, a line of less resistance, which may be guessed at from what we had to say a few minutes ago with regard to the innate charm and attractiveness of the imaginary, or the unreal, or the realm of the imagination, whichever we care to call it. This is the often-mentioned "flight from reality," in which the child drifts from the too-hard and unsympathetic atmosphere of a critical and deriding school-world, into the sympathetic, warm, kindly and comfortable world of make-believe. Here he can always excel, and with no effort at all; for he himself is writing the scenario around himself as the hero, and he can always put his dream competitors at a disadvantage, and distance all rivals, for the simple cost of thinking about such a delightful triumph! Which of us has never allowed himself to dream over what he would do if he were to inherit a million dollars; nor enjoyed the thrills that accompany such a charming and delightful revery? Quite a bit easier and pleasanter than

getting out and hustling to accumulate even a thousandth part of such a sum, wasn't it? Which of us has never, in his callow days, dreamed of the joys of being bigger, or stronger, or a better dancer, or a more attractive "ladies' man," than any one else in his group,—and of basking in the smiles of ladies fair, as a result of this pleasantly imagined eminence? Rather a different thing from laboriously and painfully striving to attain to all of these excellencies; especially since we were probably quite certain that they were absolutely beyond the bounds of possibility!

For the child who is not getting a satisfactory emotional outlet by way of self-expression and domination of his environment, and who is constitutionally unable to attain such a dominance over the realities with which he is surrounded, this escape into dreamland as a result of his flight from the unbearable conditions of his everyday school life, is far and away the easiest way out. And it is a highly dangerous way out, too. For such a child makes the minimum impression upon his teacher, as compared with either the successful child who is basking in the warm glow of public-approval, or the case-hardened

young rascal who has secured an equally warm, though far more lurid, place in the glare of society's disapprobation! The deeper he is allowed to sink, or the farther he is allowed to drift, in this unsuspected situation, whose very lack of annoyance to his teacher permits its existence, the greater the risk, and the more difficult the task of reclamation will be.

This conception of the flight from a reality that may be unbearable, not alone because it is too hard to be borne, but as well because it is too boring and drab to be endured, gives us a new and rather illuminating explanation of the appeal that a certain type of trashy fiction, the stage, and (most potent of all) the "movies," have for so many of our population. And this is true not only of the *chronologically* young, but as well of those of maturer years, with a somewhat infantile reaction toward this intensely popular form of escape from drabness. So long as there is a good-looking hero or heroine with whom the "fan" may merge his own identity while the lights are low and the music soft and dreamy (conditions notoriously conducive to the day-dreaming or brown-study state), the show is sure to be a huge suc-

cess. The fact that this surrogate, or vicarious self, does such noble and difficult things for the gratification of the ego of the spectator, who has thus temporarily become the actor, (with no more expenditure of activity or labor than may have been involved in the acquisition of the admittance fee), insures his unmeasured approbation. Difficult situations challenging mental effort on the part of the spectator for their solution; unhappy endings, however logical and compelling and true to the probabilities or the eternal verities they may be; anything, in short, that disturbs the delightful "day-dreamy" state of the entranced "fan,"—is obviously a check to this pleasing process of self-glorification by identification with the screen character. So, out with it from the scenario; do not be so simple as to expect it to appear on the silver screen; on peril of its endangering the capital of producer or distributor by becoming that most tragic of all movie entities, a "flop!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY EVER OFFERED—EDUCATING A CHILD

It would be hard to find a thoughtful student of the conditions of the day, who would care to deny that education is the greatest problem that we have. Even those who might at first thought be inclined to assign to prohibition, the movies, present-day morality, or religion, a prior place of importance, cannot doubt that the *education* of the people in the right attitude to take toward prohibition, the proper standards to erect for the movies, the correct conceptions to hold regarding their own morality, and the truest and highest type of religion to arrive at, is the task of the hour. To whom shall we confide this many-sided task of education? Who or what are the agencies so capable and so conscientious that we can entrust to them this most important of all the tasks confronting our democracy today?

A generation ago, the answer was easy,—though whether the easy answer was the correct one, we may have to consider in a moment. Education for the American boy or girl was a more or less standardized affair, which most of us took for granted as being the best thing of the kind obtainable, and far superior to anything so far evolved by the genius of any other people or race. We admitted without argument that the little red school house, or its city equivalent, was without any doubt the finest thing in the way of education for American youth that had been, could be, or for the matter of that need be, evolved. No other country had anything like as perfect a system as this of ours; it had made the nation a nation of literates, to a degree far beyond any other of the great nations of the world; and it was turning out a population of educated graduates who were eminently fitted by virtue of its finished work to carry on the great traditions of the fathers in government, education, and religion.

So far, so good. But then along came these busybodies, the newer psychologists and educators, with their "norms," their standards, their tests. And lo and behold, our lovely dream of a perfect

democratic education, available to all, and benefitting all, was rudely shattered; and we began to be told things that, as loyal patriotic Americans, were an outrage and a scandal in our ears! We found that much of the education that we had been so proudly praising, was virtually a waste of time; that much of the real education attained by our boys and girls was gotten by them in spite of, rather than because of, what the schools were doing for them; and that in a vast number of instances education for life really began only *after graduation* from our costly educational system. We began to realize that the children that we were sending to school with good eyesight, were returning to us with eye-strain; that straight backs were being made crooked; that fearless little minds were being imbued with a numbing, cramping fear of the teacher,—a far different thing from that "fear of the Lord" that we are assured is "the beginning of wisdom!" Parents began to go to school to see what was going on; and those who did any more than to go through a perfunctory form of "meeting the teacher," began to get a new and rather disturbing conception of what this "education," whose perfection they had been taking so smugly for

granted, might be doing to their children. Mothers who came home with a splitting headache, after spending an hour or two of one morning in the classroom that their daughters and their daughters' teacher had to stand for five hours, five days a week, imbibed a disturbing suggestion that perhaps "school-strain" might be more than a mere catch-word, after all. Fathers who fled from the school room through sheer boredom after half an hour of sitting through some exercise of history or geography, and who never thereafter could summon up courage enough to subject themselves to a repetition of the ordeal, began to consider,—albeit most reluctantly,—that perhaps there might be some slight excuse for their sons who had failed to evince the absorbing passion for the acquisition of knowledge, that we fathers like to think marked our own adolescent years,—but that we well know did *not* characterize our dalliance along the path of learning! Sons and daughters graduating from high school and college, and then finding themselves without real desire or leaning toward any sort of career in business or profession, at an age when their "less fortunate" boyhood and girlhood

friends were well started in their life work, made fathers and mothers realize, albeit often too late, that the stereotyped education might not be all that had been claimed! Last of all came the disclosures of the Great War, with its educational and psychological tests of the young men of the land,—when we woke up with a start to find that the little red country school house and the big brick city school building, in spite of our sweeping approval of them and their work, had not even turned out a nation of literates!

What to do! That was, and is, and has been for a longer time than is generally recognized, the state of mind of a very intelligent, though discouragingly small, percentage of our thinking population. Way back in 1897, when John Dewey wrote his *School and Society*, this feeling of dissatisfaction with education as it was commonly conceived of, was sufficiently widespread to gain for that epoch-making little book a very wide and well-informed reading public. The New York Ethical Culture School, founded even further back, was an expression of distinct dissatisfaction with everyday education. It is an interesting fact that modern education, or the

newer conception of education and what it should be, is just about as old, or as young, as the automobile! The discouraging thing about this thought, however, is that whereas no self-respecting man thinks of providing for his family a car of a type that would have been considered quite smart and up-to-date ten, or even five, years ago,—many a supposedly wide-awake man today is perfectly satisfied to give his son or his daughter an education whose model was definitely passé twice that number of years ago! "Oh, the public school, (or Miss Somebody's School, or the old Such and Such Academy, as the case may be) was good enough for me; and I guess it is good enough for my boy!" Is the type of illumination that was used then, good enough for your son? Is the kind of transportation good enough? Is education to stand still, while every other phase of life gallops ahead of it, in this twentieth century of progress? What are we going to do about it,—be satisfied, or get something modern in the way of education?

To give even the sketchiest sort of a survey of what the newer educational ideals are, would be far too much of a task for a whole book, much less for

this short chapter. John and Evelyn Dewey have attempted it in their suggestive and stimulating little volume, *Schools of Tomorrow*, in which they give brief sketches of a dozen experimental schools in as many parts of the country, which are attempting in almost as many different ways to work out some solution of the problem of what modern education should be and do. We may not here even glance with them at these fascinating little laboratories of real life. We may simply state some of the objectives that modern educators are setting up; and then compare them with the objectives that seemed to govern the education of our childhood, or that we can discern as governing the education that is being ladled out to so many of our own boys and girls today, so far as we can discern any objectives at all. "Learning by doing"; training the five physical senses before attempting to train the intellectual faculties; correlating educational tasks with real life; putting actual interest into school tasks, and not imposing them merely as disagreeable things to be gotten through with, because they are "good for us"; making school so attractive that "being kept in" would be a reward, not a punishment; learning arithmetic,

ethics, book-keeping, and manners by actually running a store in the school-house; children changing the diet of the home because of the common sense and practical suggestions of the teaching at school; these are a few of the things that the newer education concerns itself with. Is your child getting any of these things,—and are you satisfied if he is not? If you *are* satisfied, are you a good parent? And if you do not know whether he is getting them or not, and whether he ought to be getting them or not, are you a well-informed parent? If you are not a well-informed parent, can you be a good parent?

Not pleasant, some of these questions, are they? And yet it may be more unpleasant still to awake to the fact, some years hence, that *our* children were being given the husks of education, while other children, whose parents were more alert to the importance of the subject, were getting the grain; that *our* children were being given the wornout model, while other parents' children were getting the up-to-date type; that *our* children were going through the stamping mill, while other parents' children were being e-duc-ated,—"led out" into the fuller day of knowledge and wisdom

and training that the word "education" originally meant, and can mean again today, if we will but insist upon getting for our children as modern a variety of education, as we demand of the dealer who sells us our radio or our phonograph.

This chapter on Education will be a disappointment to those parents who have been expecting to find in it a cut-and-dried solution to their problem. It has been written with this thought definitely in mind,—that there is no such thing as a cut-and-dried solution to the problem. What then can a parent do? First and foremost, if he is a parent in any way worthy of the name, he must be willing to visit his child's school, not once, but several times, each term. He must do this, not merely as a hasty visitor, but as a leisurely observer, with time and willingness to see what sort of educational pabulum is being fed to his child. It is no fair or reasonable answer to this demand, to say that a business man has no time during the day to do things of this sort. The business man who cannot arrange upon occasion to do just this sort of thing, may find upon a later occasion that he has to arrange to take far more time off, for very unpleasant occurrences that might have been prevented

had he been willing to make the slight effort necessary to accomplish this comparatively simple task. During his inspection of the school and of the classroom and of the teacher he must, if he desires to gain the most out of his time and effort, assume a mental attitude that has been urged upon him in other parts of this little book. This attitude is one summed up briefly and succinctly in the Golden Rule; and in order to assume it most successfully and gainfully, he must be constantly arranging cognate situations in which he mentally places himself in positions similar to those in which his child is being put, in order to judge adequately of the effect of the situations in which he sees his child placed. For instance, if he finds that his own mind wanders hopelessly during a teacher's "explanation" of a difficult point, and that he is more muddled at the end of the talk than he was to start with, it requires no great mental gymnastics to realize that his son is probably equally muddled; and that unless some other explanation is made, he will not only fail to get this point clearly, but may lose interest in the whole subject. It may, however, require the building of a mental picture of himself associating with his peers, and being

subjected to a very painfully embarrassing snub, before he can properly evaluate the feelings of his son, whose perfectly proper question meets with a sneering or derisive reception at the hands of the teacher, plus a patronizing laugh from the rest of the pupils, ever alert to curry favor by siding with the teacher against one of their own number. It will not do for him to excuse his lack of interest,—yes, his positive boredom,—on the ground that the subject under consideration is too elementary to hold his more mature mind! It is a well-known fact that the public speaker who can gain and hold the attention of the most limited and immature of his audience, will command the close attention of the most erudite; whereas he who aims to hold the most mature of his auditors, will probably fail not only to capture the rest, but even to attract the one he aims at!

And what if the parent finds that the school, as he evaluates it, is deficient in much or in all that a school should be; what can he do? At least, he is in a position,—not comfortable, perhaps, but certainly far more salutary,—to cease deluding himself into the belief that because his child is attending "a" school, he is thereby being

educated. He can begin to look about him in the community, to find where a better school is to be obtained; and if the procuring of such better educational facilities involves dispensing with a much-loved motor car or a highly-prized style of living, he can at least look matters in the face, and decide them with his head, and his backbone, and not exclusively with his wish-bone!

Still another course is open to him. If he has not lost all of the reforming Puritan zeal and backbone that was once part of the heritage of the red-blooded American, he may decide that the school which is being run for his children, by his tax contributions, shall show some attempt to keep up with the march of progress; just as his streets must be paved with twentieth century paving, his city lighted with twentieth century illumination, and his residence and office supplied with twentieth century sanitary drinking water. An agency already exists for accomplishing this object, a weapon or tool already wrought to his hand, in the Parent Teacher Association, without which no self-respecting educator today thinks of conducting his school. It is a fact not generally realized by the laity, but one keenly felt and

frankly acknowledged by the school-men and school-women, that the parent can accomplish just about as much as he desires. The school inspector or the principal may *order*,—but the vigorous and determined parent can *accomplish*, which is quite a different thing!

Just one illustration of this. In the course of my work with children, I have found that, for reasons that we need not go into here at length, the average child under ten or eleven does far better, mentally and educationally as well as physically, on a three-hour school day than he does on the more usual five-hour day. The up-to-date private schools generally have recognized this, and have instituted the shorter day for their younger children; but the public schools, and a discouragingly large number of the less advanced among the private schools, still lag behind with the five hour day for these little tots. While I have never yet attempted to change the practice of any one school in this particular, I think it is no exaggeration to say that I have had notes written to the teachers and principals of literally hundreds of children, asking that the shorter school day be instituted for these indi-

vidual cases. In only two out of all this number has any objection been raised; and in one of these, a second note worded a little more strongly was all that was necessary. In the other, the mother was "outbluffed" by a reactionary principal; who later on, after the nervous breakdown which followed this insistence upon the long day, allowed the child to return to class for two hours a day "as a visitor!" It is an interesting corollary to this experience, that in practically no case has it occurred that a child who would have been "promoted" had he kept on with the five hour day, has been "left behind" as a result of the institution of the shorter day. On the other hand, many a child whose promotion has been considered out of the question, judging by his progress on the longer day regimen, has been enabled to keep on with his grade, by this simple expedient of resting him by removing him from the class when his physical and mental limit has been reached, and sending him to school next day well rested and ready for his three hours of intensive, productive work.

If such an upsetting thing as this has been done without effort in so many individual instances, it is easy to see what a group of seriously minded,

interested parents might accomplish toward the betterment of their own school. Nor need they fear opposition upon the part of faculty and management; an active, alert, and intelligent interest in the school on the part of its parents, is what educators have always longed for. With it, they have always felt that they could remove mountains. And if ever there were mountains whose removal is called for, they exist in some of our schools of today. It will be thanks to the efforts of alert and progressive parents, if they disappear from our "schools of tomorrow."

CHAPTER IX

THE GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY EVER ASSUMED—DISCIPLINING A CHILD

It would be hard indeed to find a subject that has caused parents as much anxious thought, depressing worry, and out and out discouragement, as that of "Discipline." Every theorist has his own conception of what discipline should bring about. And every parent knows how far this conception of the ideal differs from the actual result, as he sees it in his own child, from day to day. What has the newer psychology to offer us, for this difficult phase of parenthood?

Miss Anna McLin, head of the Child Education Foundation in New York City, contributes a valuable thought about what we expect of discipline for our children. What do we mean, she asks, when we speak of a well-disciplined man; and what, when we speak of a well-disciplined

child? If, among a gathering of distinguished men, one should be described as being particularly well-disciplined, we should understand by this term that he was the one who had the best *control of himself*,—one whose inner self had all his faculties under the most perfect control. If, on the other hand, we were to pick one child out from a group of children as being the best disciplined, what should we mean? We should mean that that child was the most quickly responsive to the *outside* control of some adult,—his parent or his teacher. In other words, by "well-disciplined," we mean when speaking of a child just the opposite of what we mean when speaking of an adult. Does the well-disciplined child naturally develop into the well-disciplined adult? If so, at what age, or at what stage of his development, does the absolute yielding to another's will that constitutes the state of "discipline" in the child, disappear; and how does this important matter of making decisions pass from the governing outsider, into the hands of the individual himself? For it is decision-*yielding* that constitutes this conception of discipline in the *child;* whereas it is decision-*making* that gives the *adult* the right to be called "well-disciplined."

Now candor compels us to admit that such a complete volte face as this, never *is* taken by the extremely docile child. His parents are never quite ready to admit that the time has come when he is old enough to decide important questions for himself. All of us can call to mind, in our own circle of acquaintances, just such model "well-disciplined" children of a larger growth, who have never grown up, in the real sense of the term. While adults in physical and mental development, such men and women have grown up, not into self-reliant, capable, "well-disciplined" executives at all; but instead are self-distrustful, subservient, timorous subordinates, transferring their obedience toward their parents into a cringing fear of the business superiors under whom they happen to be placed. If we look this common fact straight in the face,—that such excessively well-disciplined children do not make well-disciplined adults,—we may be helped in our study of the whole question of discipline for our children.

It is always a wise preliminary step, before starting out after something that we want, to sit down and very seriously consider just what is the nature of the thing that we are after. Failing this wise

precaution, we may some time undergo the rather bitter experience of waking up to find that the something that we have obtained, is in reality not the thing we wanted at all. And so all our striving has been directed toward the attainment of a goal that we never wanted to reach! What then is the type of discipline that we parents desire to obtain? And what is the means that seems most likely to lead to it?

What idea comes to the mind of most of us, in response to the word Discipline itself? To many perhaps the first association or response to this word is a fleeting picture of the Prussian army, its serried ranks in perfect unison of action; possibly a recollection of the famous "goose-step," as seen in some little German town during vacation days, in the years before the war. If the phrase "discipline of children" is spoken, the thought called up is perhaps that of a father or mother giving a crisply spoken command, while the child springs to carry it out with promptness and dispatch,—while in the hazy background stand a few admiring adults, registering approval of this quick compliance. It may not be unfair or inaccurate to suggest that somewhere in between these two pictures, lies a

pretty average cross-section of the current popular idea of discipline.

Let us look for a moment at the underlying motive of this conception of discipline. Can we be sufficiently honest with ourselves to unearth it? Is it really the ultimate good of the child that activates the parent here; or is it, in a subtle, well-disguised form, a glorification of the parent himself, as the commanding personality who gives orders which are so unhesitatingly obeyed by an inferior, the child? We shall have occasion later on to discuss more intimately the quite unconscious "will to power" (self-maximation, or striving of the ego for satisfaction, the psychologists call it) that persists in the wisest and best of us, and that is especially insidious in the way it has of besetting parents, teachers, and anyone else set in authority over children. In such an individual, this "ego gratification" is not held in salutary check by the same characteristic in other adults with whom he is thrown (as it is in ordinary intercourse with one's peers); but is allowed to develop to a dangerous degree, that common parlance has seized upon and crystallized in its conventional view of the "bossy old maid school

teacher!" If we will do our best to be honest with ourselves,—not nearly the simple thing we have considered it in the past, now that we are coming to realize how hard our unconscious strives to keep us from just such honest searching of motives, by the process we know as rationalization,—we shall find that in many situations in which we thought we were acting entirely from the standpoint of the child and his good, we have really been actuated by an element of self-assertion that we should not have believed possible.

If you are a parent, it is an easy matter to test this out for yourself. The next time that your child flatly disobeys you (this should of course never occur,—but all of us who are parents know that it may be expected to happen to us at any time!), let your righteous wrath, or perfectly justifiable indignation, or whatever you choose to call it, have its usual full swing, and do to the child whatever you are accustomed to do under such circumstances. And then go aside, sit down quietly, and try to analyze your state of mind, honestly and without prejudice. Place on one side your genuine fear for the future of the child, if he is allowed to defy you, and your dread of the

disastrous effects upon himself of such defiance. On the other side, place your perfectly comprehensible (but none the less reprehensible!) offended pride, your wounded self-love, and the feeling of chagrin because *your* will has been flouted. If this is not unpleasant enough, make it still more embarrassing, by allowing the situation to occur in the presence of some adult friend,—preferably one who "doesn't like children." Then analyze and evaluate the additional emotions evoked in yourself; the wounded self-esteem, humiliation that your friend should see you worsted in an encounter with your own child, resentment at your helplessness to obtain obedience, and shame that your practise, as illustrated by this incident, squares so ill with what your friend has heard you say about your strictness with your child. The revelations that such self-analysis leads to, are not pleasant. Nor will they make your future "disciplining" a very enjoyable procedure. They will make it a more intelligent procedure, however; and if knowledge is really power, they will make it a more potent factor in bringing about the sort of result that may fairly be hoped for, from "disciplining."

But, you may say, is it not necessary, for the

sake of the preservation of his life even, in some time of emergency, that a child be taught to yield absolute, implicit, unquestioning obedience to his elders? Is it not absolutely essential that he should know that he *must* obey unhesitatingly? And if he doesn't learn to yield such obedience at all times, without questioning, what is to prevent his suffering some terrible accident, which might have been avoided had he learned always to obey without any discussion?

If unquestioning, implicit obedience could be procured by the repetition of such highly charged scenes of "disciplining" as we have been supposing; if punishment repeated ad libitum and ad nauseam would actually produce this; then there would, to be sure, be that much at least to be said in its favor. Unfortunately, however, the experience of every parent who can be unprejudiced in evaluating it, shows us that there is but one way in which blind obedience, operating at all times without possibility of exception, can be procured,—if it ever can be procured, which is open to very grave, doubt. That way is by the constant operation of an over-mastering, all-engrossing fear of the person who gives the order. Grant for a moment

that we are willing to implant in the mind and heart of a little child, whom we want to grow up in the image of his Maker, such an overmastering fear of any other human being, with the cringing, cowering mental attitude that such a fear presupposes. Such a fear will operate only when the child knows, or thinks he knows, that the dreaded parent may see, or hear of, his disobedience. Thus, to our problem of disobedience, we shall have added the problems of fear, deception, and downright falsehood. And we have still further removed the possibility of his gradually learning to make decisions for himself, on their own merits, uninfluenced by the slavish fear of punishment.

For all through the question of the prescribing or administering of discipline for a child, our guiding thought should be, not so much what the *immediate* effect shall be, as what the *ultimate* end is that we hope to accomplish. For so long as he is sufficiently immature, our alertness and our physical oversight may be trusted to protect him from most of these terrible hypothetical dangers that we so love to conjure up for the sake of argument. Whereas the time is coming, all too soon, when he will have passed beyond the stage at

which we can give him this physical protection from dangers, and he will have to "go it alone," without the loving guidance that we have been so willing to bestow upon him. It is as ridiculous to pass judgment upon any form of discipline by its immediate effects, as it would be to judge of the success of a farmer's outlay of time, strength, and money spent for seed and fertilizer, by what the land had produced one week after he had sown his seed in the furrow. The time to judge the worth of the farmer's effort, is at harvest time; not when the first tiny green shoot appears above the surface of the ground. Discipline is a growth that must come from within. It is not a ready made system that can be imposed from without, like stamping with a rubber stamp.

The late war gave us an unexampled opportunity to judge of the perfect, logical end-results of a rigid system of discipline designed to secure just such instant, implicit, unhesitating obedience as our hypothetical parent has just told us his child must learn to yield him. Fortunately or unfortunately, we American parents have never succeeded in carrying through, to its logical conclusion, this ideal of discipline, that has seemed so desirable to

some of us. It remained for the Teuton, with his ultra-logical mind and his extreme attention to detail, to demonstrate for us what the end-results of such a system would be, if we had the perseverance to carry it through, as he did. The whole civilized world was treated to the intensely interesting,—though at the same time unspeakably shocking,—spectacle of gentle, kindly, ordinarily humane men abrogating in favor of their superiors in the military machine all right of individual judgment and individual decision. Acting under the ægis of just such unhesitating, unquestioning obedience to superiors, these ordinarily humane men performed barbarous, brutal and cruel deeds that shocked humanity,—deeds that none of them would ever, as individuals, have dreamed of doing. What had caused the seeming paradox? Nothing but the ideal of implicit obedience, carried through to its logical conclusion. And it gave the world the spectacle of "Prussian discipline" that had but to be seen, in order to be abhorred. And yet, that is exactly the type of obedience that many of us are quite sure that we covet for our children. But, you say, when they get older they can begin to learn to

think for themselves. No age has yet been set, at which a parent may be trusted to allow his child to think for himself, such is the inability of the average parent to realize that maturity can ever come to his child. Who of us does not know business men, who as large executives delegate broad authority to their subordinates; and yet at seventy years of age have been unable to credit their sons of forty with sense enough to decide the most trivial points for themselves? Who of us has not known mothers who at sixty still believed their daughters of thirty-five too immature to select hat or gloves for themselves acceptably? The saying of John the Baptist, with reference to the Master, "He must increase, but I must decrease," is one that every parent should grave deep upon the tablets of his heart. Let him set a date when he will allow this increase and its accompanying decrease to begin; and let that date when he will allow his son to increase in will and power and responsibility, be "Today!" Let it be "Today" that he will himself commence to slip back out of the most conspicuous part of the picture, in favor of the budding little life and personality that was given into his keeping, not to exploit and domin-

ate and drive, but to lead out into the glorious liberty of the sons of men.

What is it, then, that we want to accomplish by this discipline of ours? For we must visualize the end, if we are to plan intelligently toward accomplishing it. It should be easy enough for us to set up an ideal to which all of us can subscribe, especially if we will but make it general enough. Let us say then that our discipline must be such as will lead a child in safety through the physical perils of a dependent childhood, out into the ordered, self-controlled freedom of adult American manhood or womanhood. Our adult citizenship, with its spiritual independence and its vigorous, upstanding, selfdetermining manhood, is radically different from the combination of servile obedience to authority above, and overbearing rudeness to those lower down in the social scale, that constitutes the worst kind of Prussian junkerdom. And the discipline that we shall evolve for the production of this desired end-product, must differ likewise from that which would produce the blind, unhesitating obedience to any and every higher authority, that so many of us have been inclined to accept as ideal, without ever going so far as to

think the matter through to its logical conclusion.

Modern psychology has a very cogent explanation for the difficulties experienced by the parent who prefers to drive at his discipline by what he chooses to call the "old-fashioned method" of getting obedience. There is inherent in every one of us, (and in our children quite as definitely as in ourselves)—deep down in our unconscious, as well as plainly discernible in our consciousness, a certain dogged, stubborn resistance to the imposition of all authority from without, called "NEGATIVISM." Now negativism is a decidedly unpleasant, disagreeable, wrong-headed sort of quality to arouse. If you doubt this, just turn back in memory to the last time that you attempted to make your young son put on a perfectly good suit that, for some hidden unknown reason, he did not wish to wear. Or think back to the time when you tried to convince your little daughter that oatmeal for breakfast is something for which all good children should show an enthusiastic fondness! Long after you had lost out in the struggle, or else in apparently winning it had ruined the pleasure of the whole family in the outing or the meal, there lingered a most unpleasant atmosphere of strained

relations. This state of affairs did not make things easier for anyone concerned,—in spite of the satisfaction that your unconscious derived from getting his own way! Quite possibly, the aversion that the young gentleman already possessed against his suit, or that the young lady entertained against all cereals in general and oatmeal in particular, received an increased fervor that will make subsequent experiences along these lines still less pleasant. This negativism, then, is by no means a pleasant quality to evoke against one's self, as a parent exercising his parental functions.

On the other hand, we would not, if we could, completely do away with this very definite manifestation of individuality. For, while perhaps not a most attractive trait, it is nevertheless one of the most potent for good, of the allies that we parents can enlist to aid us. For it is quite as important for an individual to have strong aversions, as it is for him to have strong predilections; to have powerful dislikes, as to have powerful likes. A strong aversion to alcohol makes a sober citizen. A powerful aversion toward immorality, makes for cleanness of character. A

hatred of wickedness, spells righteousness. If you doubt the value of negativism in the right place, and the tragedy of the lack of the power and the willingness to say "No!" and to mean it, at the proper time, just look around at the spineless he-flappers and she-flappers that follow any suggested course, no matter how little satisfaction it offers, provided only that it is the fad of the moment. A little of this despised negativism, that refuses to accept any outside dictation, even that of the passing vogue, and prefers always to do the opposite on principle, would have saved these poor weaklings from the craze for doing a thing because "everybody's doing it now."

But if negativism can be such an obstacle to us parents, as we have seen it depicted, a few paragraphs back; and if the lack of it can be so much worse: what are we to do about it? We are to do just what we ought to do about every other force in nature with which we find ourselves in contact. We are to harness it, direct it, make it work *for* us instead of *against* us. We are to utilize its destructive powers, not against *ourselves*, and the things that we consider desirable and of good report, but against the *evil, undesirable* suggestions

emanating from *others*. If our recommendations for the desirable things can come, not as orders from above, with the negativism-arousing force of commands, but instead as suggestions running with the natural bent of the child, we may succeed in avoiding collision with this obstructive force altogether. For every parent knows, just as every army office knows, that even direct commands can be given in such a way as either to invite cooperation, or to put a premium on disobedience! Leave negativism to expend its ugly force upon evil suggestions made by others. Remember that no outsider is as attractive to your child as you are,—until of your own volition, chiefly out of your ignorance of child psychology, you deliberately or precipitately abdicate in favor of the outsider, by arousing this force against yourself.

This avoidance of issues, that a less wary parent either makes or blunders into, constitutes a very important phase of the fine art of successful parenthood. But let no author, teacher, or philosopher, be he ever so gifted either in literary expression or in knowledge of parent-lore, hope to be able to bestow this power, where it is absent. However, it

is surely not too much to ask that every one of us realize that the less this ugly trait of negativism is aroused against us as parents, the more we shall be able to suggest as friends, and the less occasion we shall have to order as superiors with a divine right to command. The more we can employ toward our children that fine tact and courtesy that we are proud to lavish upon the casual guest in our home, the easier will be our task of guiding our children along the ways that we would have them follow.

Apropos of this matter of employing tact, courtesy, and common politeness to our children, in our dealings with them, instead of giving commands in the curt tones that many parents unconsciously affect, simply because they *are* parents, and feel that it is beneath the dignity of a parent to ask for anything when he can command it: we sometimes forget how constantly and how intensively imitation is at work. Whether we will it so or no, the surest way to elicit a cross, irritable, fretful answer from a child, is for a parent to order him about in the cross, irritable, fretful tone that so many of us allow ourselves to employ toward our children, when fatigue or worry or

exasperation has temporarily let down the bars of our self-control. The mere fact that they *are* our children, is hardly justification for allowing ourselves to exhibit toward them a license that we should not dream of taking, in our intercourse with acquaintances of adult age. It is an illuminating experience,—albeit not always a happy one,—to "listen in" at the play of our children, and to observe the harsh, curt tones of the older children as they give commands to the younger ones, in what they conceive to be the approved manner for adults, whether as parents or as teachers. We shall recognize, to our own discomfiture, that words, tone, and look are frequently perfect parodies of our own style of issuing orders!

Perhaps here, as elsewhere, we may get helpful light on the child's emotional reactions, if we will imagine what we ourselves should feel, if we found ourselves in an analogous situation. Which superior officer, or employer, obtains a higher type of service from us? Is it the one who gives us curt, brusque orders in a harshly overbearing manner, perhaps criticizing our previous efforts the while? Or do we give our best to the one who indicates

in a courteous, considerate way what he would like to have done, allowing us a reasonable degree of latitude and initiative in our execution of the task? The answer is obvious. But the application, while equally obvious, will demand all the good will and all the good resolutions of which we are capable, the next time we have to give commands to our children.

"Do you mean that I should *never* give a direct command to my children?" a worried parent asks. And is there ever a conscientious parent who is *not* a worried parent, one wonders? How a serious, thinking parent, with problems galore, sometimes envies the so-called "strict disciplinarian," who "solves" (?) all his problems by a speedy recourse to corporal punishment! Such a parent seems not to have a doubt in the world as to the perfect rectitude of his own course, and the perfect imbecility of anyone who ever suggests that a parent may be wrong, and his child right! The question as to whether direct commands are never to be given children, may perhaps be answered as follows. Give direct commands to your children, by all means; but do it only in such cases as would justify your giving similar

direct commands to your wife, your intimate friend, or your business associate. In other words, there undoubtedly *are* times when the short, sharp, peremptory command is essential; where its employment, followed by quick, unhesitating obedience, may even be the means of saving a life that would otherwise be lost. But for one such case (and such a case would justify the employment of peremptory commands quite as freely in the case of one's wife, friend, or business associate), there are a hundred or more instances in which the sharp, curt command is employed in dealing with one's child, where the courteous one would have been every bit as efficacious,—and if as efficacious, certainly far more desirable.

Another pedagogic principle may be adduced in this connection. That is the very simple one, that requests and commands be couched, as far as possible, in the affirmative, avoiding wherever feasible the pestilential negative, in the form of the prohibition. This is but a further application of the profound psychological principle that we discussed under the heading, negativism. It certainly is the case that "Don't do that!" arouses a far stronger antagonism than does the pre-

cisely equivalent "Do this!" It is possible for one to test this by noticing the reaction when his wife (or her husband!) applies the touchstone "Don't go out this evening!" or, "Please stay at home with me this evening!" Which of these two forms of address arouses the greater degree of opposition? Which stands the better chance of attaining its object? Is it, in fine, too much to ask of parents that they be as courteous to their children, as they are to each other; or even to strangers?

An extension of this principle is the suggestion that in commenting upon, or "correcting," the work of children in schools, the emphasis be laid upon the affirmative or positive side, instead of picking out the faults and emphasizing them exclusively, as is so commonly done. It is much more efficacious to praise and comment upon the part of the work assigned that has been done right, than to censure the thing that has been done wrong. Take for example so simple a procedure as the "marking," or "correcting" of a spelling paper. The teacher gives out ten words to be written down, spelled correctly. Suppose the pupil spells eight of them correctly, and two of

them wrong. What should the teacher do? What he usually does do is to blue-pencil the two misspelled words. He thereby graves indelibly upon the child's mind the wrong pictures of these words, by the emotional tone of disappointment and chagrin caused by his disapproval,—to say nothing of the complete destruction of any joy the child might otherwise have taken in his achievement of spelling the eight words correctly. Furthermore, there is conveyed to him the impression (not infrequently a perfectly just one, if the teacher is of the old cut-and-dried type) that searching out his mistakes and failures is more pleasurable to the teacher, than congratulating him upon his successes. And if, in his haste to dispose of twenty or thirty more papers, the teacher uses his blue pencil rather hastily and untidily, he conveys unmistakably the impression that the paper, toiled over so carefully by the pupil, means nothing to him. If it is not worth anything but a rudely scribbled comment, that mars the paper's whiteness and neatness, one need not wonder that the pupil is unnecessarily discouraged, and takes no further interest in his marred handiwork. Certainly this is far from the

impression that the teacher desired to create! Ridiculous, impractical, and utterly far-fetched, you say? Suppose we apply to this situation the canon we agreed upon; and test upon ourselves, in our relations with our equals, the things we have been thoughtlessly doing to our children. Let us assume, for the purpose, that a friend who is learning basketry has made us a set of ten raffia table-mats; and that in two of these mats she has "dropped stitches," missed the pattern, or done whatever it is that one does when one makes a mistake in basket work. The other eight mats are perfect. What do we do; do we praise the eight, or criticize the two? Some folks that we know would undoubtedly, sooner or later, let the donor of the present know that the error had been detected. But is such a person the one for whom a gift of more perfect raffia work will later on be made? Or if, for some reason, such a gift does have to be made, will not its manufacture be attended with a very human and easily comprehended resentment, toward one who noticed and criticized the few mistakes, instead of praising and appreciating the hard work that accomplished so many successful results?

Sophistry? Perhaps so, if we press the parallel too closely. But the point is well worth taking and applying, even though the example chosen to drive it home be not altogether sound. The general rule of remembering that our children are remarkably like ourselves,—even more so, perhaps!—and the resulting practise of imagining their reactions to a given situation by inventing a similar one in which we ourselves figure, and seeing how we should react, will yield us most valuable and suggestive "leads," if we will but apply it faithfully, and carry it through honestly.

In fine, then, discipline must be courteous, not curt; affirmative, not negative; approving, not critical and carping; and vitalizing, not deadening, if it is to be of any use at all, and not a downright detriment to the children upon whom we practise it.

Do you believe in corporal punishment? is a question frequently asked. There are, to be sure, times when it seems as if nothing else would fit the situation. But the need for corporal punishment is usually in itself a confession of failure, in the instance in which it seems necessary. It implies that something was done wrong, that might have

been done better; and that, if it had been done better, the need for corporal punishment would have been obviated. A careful, thoughtful, cool and calm analysis of the incidents leading up to such an emotional orgy as corporal punishment usually results in, (emotional, by the way, on the parent's part as well as upon the child's!), after the spasm is over, will generally point out wherein lay the fault, and will aid in its avoidance when a similar situation arises later.

One invariable rule should be laid down, however, by anyone who honestly decides to employ corporal punishment. And that is, that the adult who punishes must do so only after he has divested himself of all personal feeling in the particular instance. "But that is impossible," a sorely tried and frequently exasperated parent may exclaim. Then, as you value your child's respect and your own self-respect and serenity of conscience, beware how you indulge that momentary, very human impulse to "let off steam" by hastily striking your child. Let us honestly and fairly face the fact, that this is the real motivating force in most of us, when it comes to the actual administering of punishment. Such a realization, if true,

drags the whole affair from the high plane of pure abstract justice on which we like to imagine it staged, and lets it degenerate into a mere sordid physical brawl, in which the parent's strength, like that of any street bully, beats down the inferior strength of his victim, the child. And the child, like the victim of any other brawl, emerges from the encounter in which he has been worsted by superior strength, with a sensation of bitter wrong and defeat, which he feels might have been avoided, had he himself been the bigger and stronger of the participants. This is a far remove from the emotions that any thoughtful parent desires, as the result of his correctional activities. Then, too, let no parent fail to realize that when he is himself struggling and excited in the throes of such an encounter, he cannot always judge wisely and accurately of the amount of force that he is employing. It is not an enviable experience, for a parent to find the visible marks of his anger remaining upon the delicate body of his child, after an emotional crisis such as this has passed. Respect for justice is not identical with fear of superior force, by any manner of means. The man who is flung into a tropical

jail, without shadow of right or justice, carries with him a very genuine fear of the superior power and brute force at the disposal of the petty official who placed him there. But he entertains not a shadow of respect for him,—nothing but the profoundest contempt for the petty tyranny that made the unhappy experience possible, coupled with a deep-rooted desire for vengeance upon the perpetrator of the outrage, if the chance for such reprisal ever presents itself. Nothing could be further from the mind and heart of any right-thinking parent, than to create such a reaction in the mind of his child. And yet that, or something perilously akin to it, is the sentiment that is quite likely to remain, after such an affray. For to the heated imagination of the child, the outstanding emotion in the mind of his parent has been the latter's perfectly evident intention to inflict physical hurt upon his little body. If an impersonal attitude of unemotional blind justice cannot be achieved and maintained throughout, then the conscientious parent had better keep away from physical punishment, as he would avoid a powder magazine while carrying a naked light. The tragedy of the powder mill might be more

immediate in its manifestation; but it would be no whit more certain than the tragedy in the emotional life of the child who is subjected to punishment by an angry parent, who has lost control of himself in the process.

It is doubtless hard to divest one's self wholly of any emotions, in order safely to administer corporal punishment. It is so hard, in fact, that it seems much wiser to spend a tithe of the effort required, in preventing the occasion for the punishment in the first place, by supplying the child with something positive and constructive, so that he will not fall into the uninterested, idle state that so frequently causes actions calling for punishment.

CHAPTER X

THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES—WHAT SHALL I TELL MY CHILD?

THROUGHOUT this series of personal, intimate chats about our problems with our children, the question of sex has been allowed to remain in the background, as much as has seemed possible. This has been done intentionally. For inasmuch as its value to our children has been the touchstone applied to everything included, it seemed wise to exclude anything that might give rise to controversy or arouse resistances, and hence divert us from our main aim, which was to help parents in their relations with their children. It is a well-recognized fact, that very few, if any, of us can discuss matters involving sex, without a great deal of emotional reaction of some kind or other. Either a sense of shame overtakes us; or else an exagger-

ated frankness is assumed, that is simply a compensatory swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction. An unavoidable introspection causes us to dwell overmuch on incidents connected with sex that have occurred in our own lives. In a word, we are not our true, free-and-easy selves, when sex is being discussed, whether we will it so or not. A writer or speaker, therefore, never knows what sort of a "roiled-up" medium is to receive his contribution, when this subject comes in for discussion. There is nothing that meets with so many resistances, conscious as well as unconscious, as the mere mention of this word "sex," much talked of though it is at present. And it would have been most unwise to jeopardize the success of our whole attempt at solving some of the problems of parents, by unnecessarily stirring up a muddle of personal feelings and old prejudices at the very start. Clear and sympathetic thinking was so necessary, if we were to derive any help which we could apply in our dealings with our children, that it seemed wisest purposely to avoid any allusions to this tabooed theme.

Now that we have "carried on" together long enough to get each other's point of view, however,

we can be a little more frank. For only those genuinely troubled parents who are taking their parenthood very seriously, will have had the patience and the perseverance to keep on up to this point. And even from among this troubled group, those who have not gotten some glimpse into the misty subject matter that we have been studying together, will by this time have given up in despair. Of the Gideon's band remaining, most will by now have gotten hold of at least some of the main principles sketched out. So it is no mere unmeaning gesture, to say that we understand each other's viewpoint. And therefore, since we can be trusted not to misunderstand each other, we must have come to a point where we can discuss our most difficult subject without imperilling our friendly relations.

Such being the case, it would be cowardly to dodge a vital issue. Moreover, we dare not further avoid consideration of this most important phase in the life of the child. We need not here discuss whether or not Freud has overemphasized the importance of the rôle played by sex in the child's life. Nor need we stop to bring out the point, so frequently overlooked by his critics,

that when this man, speaking in a foreign tongue which can never be perfectly translated into our own, uses the word rendered "sex," he implies a quite different meaning from the one that the word conveys to us. "Emotion," or "love," would express it much more accurately. Whether he overemphasizes the importance of this or not, no one who tries to be honest with himself can deny that sex played a very important part in the life of the child that he himself once was. Perhaps one of the most fruitful things we parents can do, in approaching this problem, is to sit down where and when we can do so without interruption, and try to recall what faint vestiges we can trace of the earliest recollections of our childhood regarding this very thing. Many of us will remember distinctly at least one occasion on which we asked some very embarrassing question of our parents, or of some other elders. And we can recall with equal clearness the mood in which we received either the frank answer to which we felt ourselves entitled, or, as was more probably the case, the evasive, shifty half-truth (or whole lie!) that these usually honest, all-wise elders of ours considered quite adequate for the annoying

little questioner. If we are successful in evoking these memories of the past, as well as others that grow out of them, we may find that we have tapped a very rich vein. It is a vein that will yield us priceless treasure for use in understanding the mental attitudes of our own children who are now passing through the emotional stages that we passed through a generation ago. It will greatly aid us in tapping this vein, if we seek these memories at a time when we feel reasonably sure of being undisturbed. It is helpful to assume a relaxed, comfortable attitude, and then to let our thoughts run along uncriticized, or "uncensored," as far as possible. In order to make much progress at this, it will be necessary for us to try to lay aside, as much as possible, the critical attitude toward our thoughts that is so natural to us, and allow our reminiscences to take whatever course they will, unhampered by our opinions of their acceptability or "propriety." We are all of us subject to a very rigorous censorhip, which will do its very best to keep us from thinking any thoughts of which our present-day, adult conscience does not approve. As the thoughts we are interested in tracing are infantile thoughts,

which when they first occurred were judged by a very different sort of concience or censorship than the adult critic who today watches over the portals of our thoughts, such a free and untrammeled "reminiscing" is harder to achieve, than might at first be realized. If, however, we are successful in keeping this critical agent in abeyance, and letting memory wander unhampered into the most strictly forbidden precincts of the mind, we may be considerably surprised at the character of some of the thoughts that will come floating up into consciousness.

Along with some random recollections of those early gropings of ours after light upon what was then such an all-engrossing topic of interest, we may very easily find intermixed some remnants of the most painful experiences that we have ever had, the recollection of which has been buried deep under the accumulations of the experiences of later years. It is doubtful whether many of us could do this memory searching with perfect honesty, without soon coming upon many experiences that we should be unwilling to rehearse in their entirety, even to our closest, most sympathetic, and dearest friends. Just what does this mean, if it

is true—and it may safely be left to the personal experience of each one of us, to decide whether or not it *is* true, after giving it a fair trial? Very obviously, it means that if each one of us has passed through such experiences in his own childhood, then at this very time other children are passing through similar experiences,—no matter how loath we may be to believe that these "innocent little things" of ours can be concerned with such repugnant matters as we have allowed ourselves to consider sex emotions and experiences. Sex thoughts at such an immature age? By all means; and by reason of the very immaturity and inexperience of that early age period, these sex thoughts are assuming an importance and a harmful influence, out of all proportion to that which they ought to exert. If ever there is a time when parents should be of supreme service to their children, it is when they are in such straits as these. And yet there is perhaps no situation in which parents who ought to be helping their children, are in denser ignorance of what is going on in these little minds. Of course, we never shall know exactly what these sex thoughts are, or what we should be doing to direct, modify,

or sublimate them. But the very fact that we realize that such things *are* taxing the minds and the emotional resources of our children, may lead us to be a little more patient and forbearing with them, so that at least we may not hinder and hamper, even though we may find it beyond our powers to help them.

One thing we can and must do, if we are not to fail incontinently at a task which it is within the powers of every parent to fulfill satisfactorily. And that is, to be ever on the alert for the time to come (and come it will, if we *are* on the alert and reponsive to certain telltale signs) when the child will give us a clue to the fact that the age-old problem of the origin or source of life is beginning to intrigue him. Here is a real opportunity for testing ourselves. Are we in earnest when we say that we are putting the interests of our children ahead of everything else? Or is false modesty, or the fear of the opinion of others, or any one of a dozen other neither weighty nor worthy motives, to be allowed to outweigh the best interests of the little lives whose direction has been placed in our hands? For the inevitable question as to "where babies come from," may pop out

at the most inopportune and embarrassing moment. And it may seem impossible to answer it at the moment, because of its sheer inopportuneness and untimeliness. Just here lurks a very real danger. For unless a tide is taken at the full, it may often fail of being taken at all! The farmer plants his seed or harvests his crop at the precise time which his theoretical knowledge or his practical experience tells him is the time for getting the best results. And a sorry farmer would he be, whose fear of the opinion of a casual visitor or a critical next-door neighbor caused him to let this psychological moment slip by him. By the same token,—or rather by an immeasurably greater token,—he is but a sorry parent who, with so much more at stake than the farmer has with his crop, allows himself to be diverted by some adventitious circumstance from properly dealing with this moment of all moments in the life of his child. Remember that our unconscious self, who hates such embarrassing moments with an overpowering hatred, and would gladly avoid them if he could, will do his best to induce us to seize the flimsiest excuse for not meeting this important crisis as we should. But we must real-

ize that the way we meet it is going to make all the difference between light and darkness, in the future life of the child who has no one else to look to for guidance. It is going to make all the difference between complete confidence and dark distrust. Let us face it, then, as we have faced other unpleasant duties that have attended parenthood in the past. And perhaps we may find that the nettle that we have feared to grasp, will turn out to be quite painless, after all!

How then shall we deal with this question, when it arises? But before discussing this, it may be worth while to see how it *may* be dealt with wrongly; how it *is* dealt with, unthinkingly of course, but none the less perilously, by thousands of parents who would not wittingly hesitate at facing any extreme of sacrifice for their children, did they but grasp the full significance of the opportunity that is slipping away from them. There are two ways of dealing with it improperly; namely, through evasion, and through direct falsehood. Rather strong words to employ for the actions of parents toward their children? True; but the fallacies they characterize are so far-reaching, so tragic in their results, that it would be but delud-

ing ourselves to use milder, less accurate terms to describe these two frequent lapses of sorely tried parents.

The "evasion method" consists in pretending that one does not hear, or that one is preoccupied with some other matter, or that one has misunderstood the question. All of these are of course half-lies, if not more than half! Another way of avoiding the issue consists in saying, patronizingly and loftily: "Oh, nice little boys and girls don't ask such questions." This form of evasion adds an especially irritating and exasperating touch to the evasion. For nice little boys and girls *do* ask just such questions; and parents might well consider it one of the greatest bits of good fortune in their lives, that their children do generally ask such questions of them, first. If they are rebuffed or clumsily lied to, they may turn next to others, such as more sophisticated children or unscrupulous servants, whose morals leave much to be desired. We shall then have the sorry consolation of knowing that it was we who, by our cowardice, turned them away from ourselves, their normal confidants, to these questionable counsellors, who can at least claim credit for telling what they know,

albeit in a form that we would hardly choose for presenting it to our children.

The "method of the direct lie" consists in telling one of those hoary, transparent bits of foolishness about the stork, or the cabbage patch, or the doctor and his black bag. If the child believes this lie, he will later be held up to the scorn of his better informed playmates; an experience that does not tend to endear to him the parent whose clumsy lie made a fool of him before his less credulous mates. If, on the other hand, he sees through the falsehood, he is pretty sure to feel a touch of the contempt that we always entertain toward the clumsy liar. This, added to the outraged dignity that he suffers from the palpable underestimation of the importance of his problem, is anything but a pleasant or valuable reaction, when directed against the person for whom he has previously had the highest regard; and whose word and example have hitherto been the most potent influences in his life.

Needless to say, neither of these courses is one to be commended. Having decided then what not to do, what is the course for us to follow, when this question, or one like it, comes up?

Perhaps the wisest course, and one which certainly has sound psychology and sound sense to back it up, is for the parent to answer honestly, and as accurately as he can, the actual question asked by the child,—*and no more!* This is not always as simple a matter as it may seem to be. For with our adult intelligence, it seems impossible to realize that what we should consider a very incomplete and fragmentary answer, necessarily leading directly to further questioning, may be quite sufficient to satisfy the child. If we follow this rule, we shall make quite sure that we are not giving him information for which he is not yet ready. Three or six months later, he may perhaps come to us with this next question. He will then be ready for the answer that goes a step further,—for which, however, he was *not* ready before, as was shown by the fact that he did not ask for it, upon the earlier occasion.

Take a case in point. A child asks, "Where did I come from, Mother?" Suppose the wise mother answers: "From mother's body, dear, right up under her heart," We adults, taking for granted a whole vast background that is quite lacking in the case of the questioning child, think

that of course he will ask: "Well, how did I get in there?" or, "How did I get out?" or, "Didn't I come out of Father, too?" As a matter of fact, the child who asks this first question will, in many, many instances, be perfectly satisfied with the one step which is covered by the reply we have supposed. His question has been dealt with in the serious way that he considers that it deserved. He has been given the definite information that he sought. And the whole incident, with no adventitious emotional tone to overemphasize it, is tucked away for future use, until such time as he is ready to fit it into the mosaic that he may be working upon at this later date. But, when he *is* ready for the next step, we must be quite as ready to take that next step with him. Perhaps it is months afterwards when he asks: "Mother, how did I get out of that place where you were carrying me, all snuggled up under your heart? Did they have to cut a hole for me to get out of?" The answer may perhaps be: "God made a way out for you, little son." Utterly inconclusive, and leading inevitably to further questioning? Yes, to you or to any other adult, if we can conceive of any adult's being

equally ignorant of the facts in the case; but in all probability perfectly satisfying to the little questioner, who lacks our adult ability to look beyond the immediate answer. When the question as to the father's rôle comes, later on, the answer may be that father was like the farmer that was seen scattering seed, the other day; that he planted the seed that afterwards grew in mother, and turned into the little boy who is asking these perfectly normal and natural questions. But how answer the embarrassing question as to how the sowing took place? The question may never be asked; or it may be asked long afterward, brought up in some entirely different connection. Until it comes, be sure not to cross the bridge that may never need crossing. If, or when, it comes, the answer, "Father's love for you and for me made it grow, dearest," may, to the eager little questioner, convey more of the real truth about this sacred matter, than would the most exact anatomical description,—which, indeed, would constitute no real answer at all, even if one could conceive of such poor taste and such poor pedagogy as offering such a literal recital to a questioning child. At a later age, of course, a more literal answer would

be called for. During adolescence, perhaps, a more strictly anatomical answer should be given. The thoughtful parent must be left to decide, when the time comes.

Another crisis that comes in the life of many, many children at some time or other, is one that may well spell tragedy, if it is not handled with skill and wisdom. This occurs on the dread day when some adult discovers that the little one, in company with some other child, either older or younger, has been conducting some investigations into a zone of the body that always, sooner or later, assumes an undue interest. This event may go undiscovered; in which case it may either be the first of many such clandestine experiences, working infinite harm; or it may pass into the limbo of forgotten experiences, because invested with no great emotional tone since the child is too young for the experience to prove absorbingly interesting, as it will at a later age. The reaction of the parent, upon discovering such an episode, or upon being informed of its occurrence by some properly scandalized neighbor, is naturally far from pleasant. It combines horror at what has happened, and at what may have happened;

disillusionment about the "innocence of one's little child," whatever that means to the individual parent; and indignation at the supposed vileness of the partner in the episode, who, in the parental mind, is always the instigator of the villainy. These, and a dozen other turbulent emotions, are apt to cloud the judgment and interfere with the highly desirable clearness of vision, without which serious harm may very easily be wrought. The almost universal, and perfectly understandable course, is to bitterly shame one's own child; and then to reprobate the other offender, and clamor for his swift and condign punishment.

Unfortunately this, like many another perfectly natural course open to sorely tried parents, is a very perilous indulgence of outraged feelings. In the first place, our knowledge of psychology makes it perfectly plain to us that the surest way to give any incident its greatest possible influence upon the mind and future life of a child, is to invest it with a highly emotional tone. And the more lurid the tone, the more powerful and the more lasting the effect. Now there is nothing so desirable, in such a juncture as the one we are considering, as for the incident to be

gotten over and forgotten as speedily, and with as little "sticking" or staying power in the emotional life of the child, as possible. The moment, however, that we permit our own highly wrought-up emotional state to enter into the equation, just that moment do we insure that the damage that might have glanced off, had we been in better control of our feelings, will sink in and begin working its harm in the little life that we so dearly love, Then too, we forget that the child has not so far become the possessor of a sense of values sufficiently sophisticated to know that the curiosity that we encourage, when it applies to certain phases of life that are acceptable to us, is reprehensible when applied to this special zone of the body. Our expressions of horror are oftentimes but a sort of compensation, by which we assert our virtue and purity, in comparison with his assumed vileness. Our holding up his companion in iniquity as some unnatural monster,—a thing that we unconsciously do, in an effort to put the other child in the wrong so as to excuse to some extent our own child,—is instinctively recognized by him as being partial and unfair. And yet he is tempted to fall in with this at-

titude on his parent's part, as a very present help in a time of trouble, and a means of reducing his share of blame, and hence of punishment, for the incident. And worst of all, the attempt to shame the child and lower his self-respect, is frequently the starting point of an inferiority complex from which he may suffer, in indirect ways, for years, if not until his dying day.

There is one danger that was commoner a generation ago than it is today. That is, for a mother to meet any of the natural and innocent questions of her daughter with regard to sexual matters, or the origin of life, or even the appearance of the menstrual cycle, in the shocked, horrified way that many women find the easiest way out of what is to them a painfully embarrassing moment. The avowal, in either an agitated or a harsh, unsympathetic manner, that "no nice girl ever has such thoughts," or that "harboring such ideas is sinful and shameless," gives rise in a sensitive and refined girl to a very painful consciousness of guilt, and hence of shame and inferiority. It also, in many cases, starts the little girl upon an emotional course that is quite certain to lead

to unhappiness throughout her girlhood, as well as to lay the foundations for an unhappy marital life later on. This is the not uncommon conviction upon the part of girls subjected to such treatment, that everything in any way relating to the sexual is animal and gross, and hence utterly degrading and vile. When later on her courtship ends in marriage, such a girl may be utterly at a loss to reconcile her prenuptial idealistic thoughts of her lover, with her newly made husband's perfectly natural expectations. Marital unhappiness, sometimes only temporary, but not infrequently permanent, may be the result of her inability to make this false ideal, lodged so firmly in her mind at an early, impressionable state of development, conform to actualities.

There is a corresponding danger in the case of a boy; not so highly charged with potentialities for harm as in the case of the girl, but for all that serious enough. This is for the sense of shame and degradation thus evoked, to invest the whole sexual life with a feeling of guilt and wrongfulness, of which he may never be able to divest it. While it would be most desirable were this feeling to apply to the illicit and forbidden realms of

extra-marital relations, the truth is that it is not usually so delimited, but embraces the whole field of sex. The impression lodged so strongly at an early age, is that all sex attraction is under the ban, impure, and reprehensible. Hence, when the time comes when marriage should and does make this attraction legitimate, he finds himself unable to rid it of the shameful connotation so early impressed upon him. This may have been made even stronger by the fact that his mother, in her successful efforts at shaming him, probably succeeded in conveying to his mind the belief that she herself was far too "pure" ever to have indulged in any emotional situations of a physical sort at all. His later realization that she must have done so, in order to have become his mother at all, is a logical realization and not an emotional one: and so has never had the power to replace his early impression of her abhorrence of all such things. This constitutes an ineradicable memory which he carries over into his own married life, along with other notions of what the behavior of a wife ought to be, based upon his more or less faulty notions of the behavior of his mother under similar circumstances. His bride, if she is hampered

with no such faulty notions, inevitably suffers in his estimation, from his erroneous comparisons,—with the obvious results that can easily be imagined.

A very real problem that parents have to face, occurs at the time when the child becomes conscious of the fact that the manipulation of certain parts of his body, gives rise to distinctly pleasureable sensations. If we do not realize that this time either has arrived, or is going to come sooner or later, in the life of every child, we have successfully deceived ourselves into the childish course of disbelieving something because it is too distasteful for us to believe it. It is very doubtful whether any individual ever came into and went through this world without discovering this physiological fact by actual experience. How shall we deal with it, when it occurs in the child?

First of all, it is well to realize that in very young children this is a physical matter, pure and simple, with no mental, emotional, or sexual connotation at all. Mere prevention by physical restraint is all that is required. When it occurs at a later stage of development, we have an entirely different problem, which must be met with the tools of explanation, remonstrance, and an appeal to pride and

self-respect, rather than with the mere physical weapon of restraint. It will make the matter much less painful and tragic if we can keep this distinction clearly in mind; and in these young infants deal with the manipulation solely in the physical realm, without any particular thought as to the emotional side. When we come across it at the later age, it will be a great help to us to remember that, contrary to the commonly accepted belief, this habit does *not* lead to mental or moral deterioration. The fact that it often *accompanies* such impaired mental states, has probably given rise to the erroneous idea that it was their *cause*. The simple explanation of the undesirability of the habit, and an appeal to the child's manliness or womanliness and self-respect, can almost always be counted upon to effect a cure. Whereas the focussing of his attention upon the matter by shaming, reproaching, or punishing him, simply invests the whole affair with an emotional tone that prolongs instead of shortening the stage, and intensifies instead of minimizing it.

One caution may perhaps need to be voiced, in a book written in this year of grace, that

might perfectly well have been omitted as quite unnecessary, ten or fifteen years ago. And that is, that with the appalling lack of restraint in drama, film, fiction, and even casual conversation today, there is a very real danger that we may be too free in discussing before or with our children, matters that should be reserved for their later years; instead of being, as used to be customary, too reserved before them. Whether or not this danger of an excess of freedom exists in our conscious intercourse with our children, there is no doubt that it exists in all the other spheres just mentioned. Such being the case, it may soon be that oversophistication will be as great a danger to the child of tomorrow, or even to the one of today, as ignorance was to the one of yesterday. Whether this time is already upon us, each parent must judge for himself. At any rate, our example in dealing with these matters is going to set a standard which cannot help having a very deep effect upon our children. And we can be very sure that nothing can have quite so deep and lasting an effect upon the way in which our children will regard such matters, as the attitude that they see their parents assuming toward

them. Let us remember that imitation is one of the most potent educative forces; and that, whether we will it so or not, the parent as a model for unconscious imitation is immeasurably more powerful a force than any other influence that can possibly be brought to bear upon a child.

CHAPTER XI

THE MOST INSPIRING TASK EVER ASSIGNED—RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEWER KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGY

THERE seems to be a well-defined fear on the part of many parents,—perhaps even more pronounced on the part of these parents' parents!—lest a study of the newer knowledge of psychology operate to undermine the foundations of their childhood faith. The tendency of psychology, they say, is to glorify the human at the expense of the divine; to explain everything, in the Bible and out of it, on so-called scientific grounds; and thus to do away with all of the miraculous, all of the supernatural, all of the divine.

Nor is this fear confined, as one might at first think, to those who have not yet attempted to familiarize themselves with the present trend, by

means of books, lectures, and study courses. Those whose reading and study have been fairly wide complain, and with considerable justice, of a certain condescending tone on the part of writers and teachers. The attitude of many of these writers and teachers is that of beings whose superior intellectual attainments have carried them beyond the restricted horizons of their earlier religious beliefs; and who now look back upon their former faith, and down upon the similar beliefs of their less advanced brethren, with a kind of amused superiority, mingled with pity for their limitations.

Unfortunately, many of those who have written on the subject *have* taken this attitude. There may even be some just grounds for this very general fear of the upsetting, unsettling effects of a closer study of the workings of man's mind. At least there is this justification for the fear, in that a great many so-called "intellectuals" seem to consider themselves, by virtue of their psychological point of view, quite elevated above the religious viewpoint of the common run of mankind, and quite beyond the religious needs, aspirations, and cravings of the rest of us poor mortals.

Now we may just as well admit that this affectation is rather general on the part of many of the writers who have tried to popularize the newer psychology among the laity; as well as of many research psychologists and psychiatrists. It may be interesting to try to analyze their reasons for taking this pose; and thus to see whether the facts are such as to justify them in so doing.

It is not difficult to see how the new point of view, in the illuminating glimpses it gives of the fascinating workings of man's mind, may almost sweep one off his feet. Especially is this a very real danger, in the case of men who are not too well grounded in the fundamental sciences; or in the case of those whose experience has been largely theoretical, and has not developed in them the practical wisdom that comes from rubbing up against all sorts of men in all sorts of conditions. In other words, it takes years of actual living, to teach the laboratory man that there is more truth and power and downright wisdom in the folkways of common people, than was ever dreamed of in his finespun metaphysical philosophy. The theory of the unconscious, with its complete and satisfying explanation

upon natural grounds of so many of the things that we have long been accustomed to look upon as mysterious, occult, and even supernatural, can very readily be applied in such a way as to give one who wishes to explain everything upon a strictly rational or materialistic basis, considerable material with which to bolster up a case. Answer to prayer; sudden startling conversions; the miracles of the Bible; the complete change from a life of sinful and selfish indulgence to one of consecrated self-denial, from drunkenness, perhaps, to sobriety, or from lustful indulgence to chastity and faithfulness; one is greatly tempted to apply to all these the fascinating hypothesis of the unconscious. If it seems to fit, then the trite, obvious first thought is to let the unconscious take the place of the Divine, as a motivating force in each case, and thus to dethrone the religious from its place in man's life. It is possible even to go as far along the road toward absolute fatalism as Freud seems to go in his full-fledged determinism; and to believe that every thought, feeling, and act is conditioned upon the chemistry of the bodily machine. Such a belief of course carries with it the conclusion that we are not free

agents in the remotest degree; but that we follow out in every slightest thought, word, and deed, the undeviating course mapped out for us by our bodily reactions.

This then is one side of the picture,—that presented by the scientist whose study of the mind of man reveals to him nothing but a most intricate and elaborate machine, set in motion by an as yet undiscovered primal force, and kept jerking and gesturing, without any volition of its own, as a result of the chemical reactions going on within it. As to the origin of this poor automaton's existence in the first place, or how he came to be here, he is silent. To such a mind, the study of the intricacies and beauties of the physical world about us,—the bursting of the leaf, the singing of the bird, the glory of the setting sun and the mystery of the rising evening star,—gives rise to the same sort of materialistic thoughts, and the same desire to explain everything on a strictly rationalistic, exclusively physical basis.

It would, however, be the height of mistaken shortsightedness and self-depreciation, were the great mass of men whose trend is less earth-bound and materialistic and pessimistic, to admit the

claim of these others, to being more "scientific" than they; or to concede that the type of mind which refuses to believe what it cannot touch, taste, and handle, is more apt to be on the trail of ultimate truth than is the type that attempts to peer through the veil, but meanwhile believes, "as seeing Him Who is invisible." On the contrary, it might fairly be claimed that it takes a higher type of mind,—a more truly scientific thinker,—to insist upon going back and back and back until an Ultimate Cause is found; than it does to be satisfied with a so-called explanation upon the ground of discovered and established facts, that cannot find for these facts any satisfactory origin at all. Now the most painstaking scientist of what we may thus call the meaner order, the kind that is satisfied with nothing that he cannot see and feel, has never been able to get back to any cause or beginning of things, that would satisfy himself or anyone else. We know that the unsolved and probably insoluble enigma of the ages, Who or What started things going in the first place, is quite as much a poser to the materialist as it can ever be to the religious. No explanation, therefore, whether materialistic

or mystic, whether of infidel or of believer, whether of deductive or of inductive reasoner, has ever been successful in positing the beginning of things upon anything the faintest bit more satisfying, more logical, more "scientific," if you will, than a Great Creator, an Eternal Life Giver, an Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent God. Now whether it be more reasonable, more "scientific," to cringe before this ultimate cause as a vast, cold, hideously soulless juggernaut,—or to adore Him as Very God of Very God, with a divine compassion for even the slightest of His creatures, down to the sparrow which shall not fall to the ground without His knowing it,—is perhaps a point for the human race always to discuss, and forever to disagree upon.

But let it be distinctly understood that there is nothing in science itself,—certainly that there is nothing in this newer knowledge of psychology that we have been studying together,—that casts any aspersion upon the type of thinker who chooses to base his belief and trust and faith and hope upon a thinking, loving, God and Savior, rather than upon a soulless, mindless, formless IT. And when one has for long regarded the unspeakable

mystery, the wordless wonder, the inconceivable miraculum of the human mind in its wondrous journey from birth, and even before birth, through life, to death and the great beyond, it seems the only tenable position to conceive of it all as being the product of some wonderful, conscious Intelligence; and but the veriest folly to imagine it as having evolved, of itself, with no outside direction, out of nothing up to its present exalted estate.

Perhaps one reason for the rather patronizing, condescending air with which some writers on the newer psychology have treated revealed religion and its believers, lies in the fact that they have been able to trace the beginnings of religion in the earliest dawn of history. They have traced the blind, instinctive strivings of savage man after some god, to the extent of making one for himself out of every force he sees in nature, and out of every animate and inanimate creation about him, long before he has any real religion at all, in the modern acceptation of the term. And having witnessed this unconscious striving of savage man after a god, even to the manufacturing of one, or even of many, to suit the need that he felt

so deeply; these students have thought that they recognized in the God of the Bible simply a more highly developed and polished and finished product made by more sophisticated man to fit his more intricate needs; but in just the same way that his primitive grandfather made one or many gods for his more primitive needs. They imply that if one is still so far back along the road of progress as to need a god, then the Biblical God is a better product than any evolved by the polytheistic savage or the animistic heathen; if one cannot get out upon the heights of present-day knowledge, and dispense with this childish need for a god of any sort!

Anyone who reasons thus, has failed to learn one of the lessons that is writ large in the history of the race. And this is, that wherever man is, and at whatever stage of his mental and emotional development he may have arrived, man is still incurably religious. It is impossible to conceive of a human being who does not, deep down in his heart, crave the steadying realization of a God,—and of a very personal God, at that, who knows him and loves him, as one soul knows and loves another. It is quite as vital a craving as that which each individual experiences with regard to

his father or his mother, or their substitutes in his own life. It is in fact inextricably intermingled with these ever-present, never-failing conceptions of father and mother. And this despite the fact that many sensible men have been able for a while to delude themselves into believing that the opposite is true and that they need no god,—just as little boys like to boast, in the daytime, how brave they are in the dark. When night time comes, whether physical or spiritual, the little boy and the boastful man alike feel the elemental fear that calls for something greater and stronger to lean upon than the unaided self. It is for each of us to decide freely,—or as freely as it is possible for any of us, with his inherited and acquired trends to affect his choice!—what his own religion shall be. But for any man to lay claim to being above the need of having any religion at all, simply shows a lamentable inability to apply to *himself* the lessons that he may learn from studying the psychology of men in general.

But just how free *is* any man to choose for himself just what his religion is to be? Manifestly, if we look at the records, and see what a negligible percentage of Roman Catholic children ever become Protestant adults,—or vice versa,—we must

realize that after all the boasted freedom of religious choice which the Constitution allows us, is almost ludicrously conditioned by our early environment. The old Jesuit's dictum, "Give me a child until he is seven, and I care not who has him after that!" was based upon the soundest of psychological principles. It may be possible to induce an emotional experience,—either with or without an intellectual element,—that will be strong enough to enable one to change from the faith of his fathers to that of strangers,—else the wonderful history of the missionary heroes of all faiths would not have been possible. But for the most part, the religious direction or trend given us by our parents in those early impressionable years of childhood, is the one that will point our religious path through life.

Now this very fact has given some of the more conscientious and fairminded among parents serious pause, in their plans for the early religious teaching of their children. For if it is true, as we have said, that the religious trend is unalterably set during these early years, why not be absolutely fair, and abstain from giving the child any religious instruction at all,

until he is old enough to choose for himself just what form his religious life is to take? Eminently fair,—but quite impossible! It would be quite as feasible to keep him from learning any language at all until he was old enough to choose which tongue he would have for his mother tongue. Impossible to do the latter, you say? No more impossible than to hold his religious development in abeyance until he reaches years of discretion. He is bound to take on, albeit unconsciously, a religious coloring toned by that of his family; and most of all, of course, by that of his father and mother.

What then shall be our attitude in teaching religion to our children? Without doubt the first thing to do is to examine our own religion,—its tangle of creeds, dogmas, formulas, inherited beliefs and spontaneously acquired convictions bred of our own experiences,—in the light of all the aids to correct thinking that we can marshall. Let us do this prayerfully as well as clearly, devotedly as well as honestly; for the faith that we arrive at as our own, will be the faith that we are to hand on to our children. True, this will be modified, altered, improved upon or made

worse, by the influences that are to impinge upon them, and the experiences through which they are to pass, in the course of their lives. But the basic faith with which they start, will be this faith that we give them. So let us fashion it for them with the very best that we have in us. As Crichton-Miller says in another connection (in his *New Psychology and the Teacher*): "It must be our aim to bring up children so that they respect all racial experience; and at the same time learn to challenge authority." This is the best that we can wish for our children, in the process of arriving in due course at the acquisition of a faith of their own. They must respect all creed that we and others may teach them; but they must be prepared to challenge all dogma before they accept it for themselves. Let us never for a moment be so presumptuous as to think of standing between the conscience of another,—even though that other be our own child,—and his conception of his duty and of his God.

Let us meanwhile realize this fundamental truth, which has been hinted at more or less plainly in the preceding pages; that the child's conception of God is a pretty accurate reproduc-

tion of his conception of his father and his mother. The only way he can visualize a loving God is in terms of a loving parent; a just God, in terms of a just parent; a cruel, harsh, retributive God, in terms of an unfeeling, stern, punishing parent. To paraphrase Emerson once more, what we *are* will take such an active part in the creation of the child's conception of his Deity, that what we *say* will not have much influence. And if, in the course of this attempt to present the finest model that can be placed before one's child, one should himself become so like the God he worships that the supreme adoration of a little child would find no wide gap in passing from the human model to the divine original; what finer reward could one desire for the toils and sufferings inherent in parenthood? Just as Ernest, by constantly gazing upon the Great Stone Face, came in time to resemble that calm, benignant visage, without realizing the transformation that his unconscious adoration was accomplishing in himself; so may we, (who knows?) in our effort to give our children the best parents that they can possibly have, achieve a closer exemplification of the God we love, than we could ever have attained to by a more conscious attempt to imitate Him.

CHAPTER XII

EVERYDAY PSYCHOLOGY—HOW IT CAN HELP FATHERS AND MOTHERS

We have been accustomed to think of psychology as a deeply scientific subject for college students, or as a technical study for advanced workers in the laboratory. Even child psychology, if it has meant anything to us everyday folk who happen to be parents, has seemed to us a subject that must be waded through by young ladies in normal schools fitting themselves to be teachers, or a theme for rather impractical essays before women's clubs. The idea of psychology as something that might give us real practical help in our everyday problems with our children,—that could help us break little Harold of his thumb-sucking, or aid us in getting Winifred to keep up with the rest of her class,—is one that is probably quite novel to most of us. Perhaps we have even

gone so far as to read, with a hope of getting help from them, some of the really admirable handbooks that have recently come out on applied psychology for parents. And perhaps our feelings thereafter have been akin to that of the mother who said: "These books warn me of the terrible consequences of doing this and that wrong thing that I should *not* do; but they leave me quite at sea as to the right things that I *should* do!"

These little talks to parents have been written with the hope of bringing to fathers and mothers who are seriously burdened with their job, some of the real help that is inherent in a knowledge of a few of the cardinal principles of the newer psychology. They are the sort of chats that a doctor who has the confidence of his patients, has in his consulting room; and they have been the means of helping some troubled parents to gain a new insight into the causes back of what they had previously considered the "perversities" of their children.

They have conveyed but a few of the outstanding suggestions that the newer knowledge of psychology has to offer to the thoughtful parent of today. Our job is too compelling a one to allow

of our sitting down and waiting for our difficulties to come upon us. If we do this, we know that they will overwhelm us. All the old aids are essential; we shall not willingly dispense with one of them. Old-fashioned religion, modern child study, Grandma's good old common sense,—we need all these, and in an ever fuller measure. But the newer psychology, to one who studies it thoughtfully, has a way of fitting all these into one composite whole,—so bringing out their strong points and so reconciling their divergences, that its beneficent offices seem indispensable, when one has once sensed their possibilities. We have taken upon ourselves this job of being parents voluntarily, nay, joyfully. We cannot shirk it now; for there is no one who can successfully fill the post of a single deserter. As we go forward, singing, to our great adventure, let us not forget to carry with us this most important part of our equipment; we shall need it many a time in the sharp encounters that we know are waiting for us, in the fighting ahead.

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